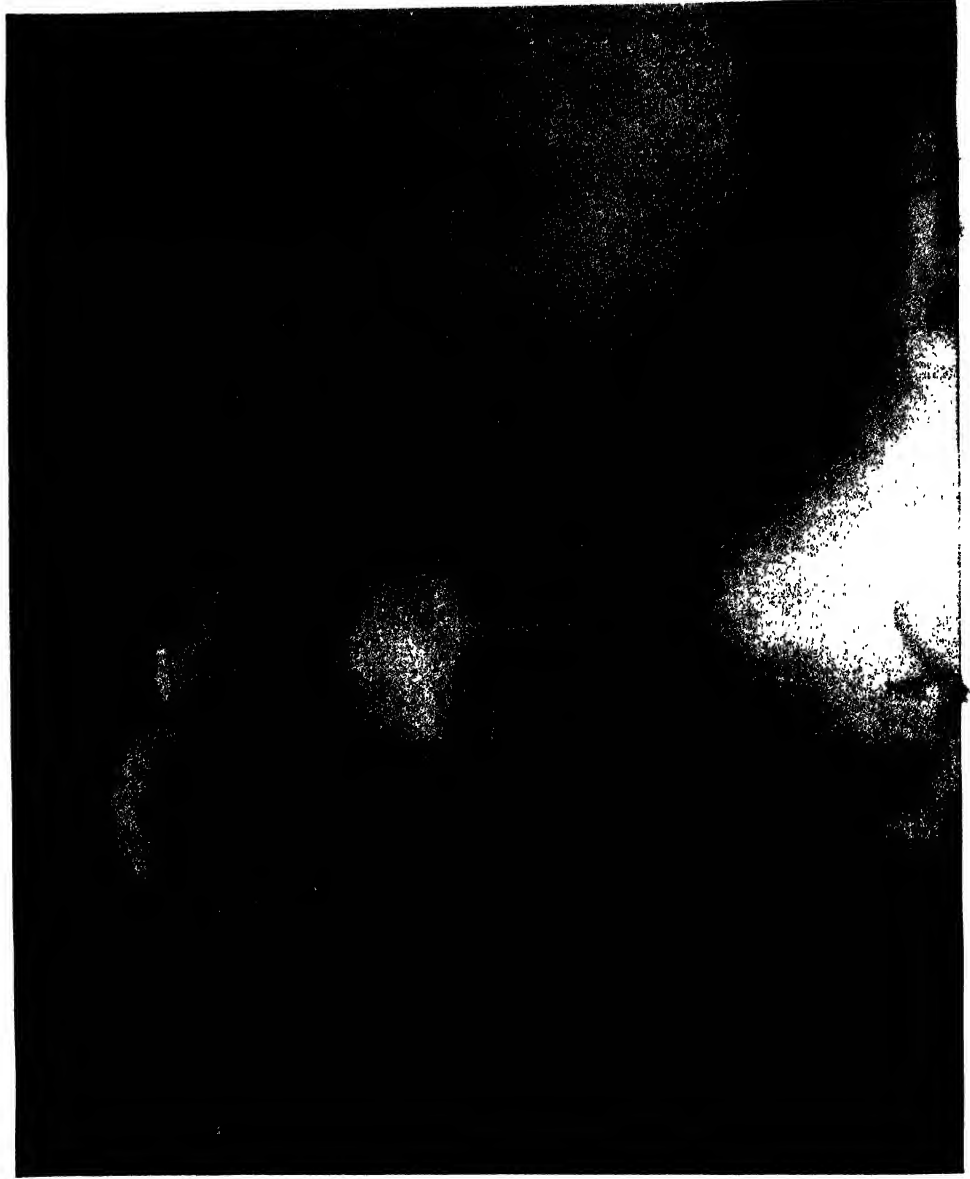


THE GOLDEN PURUSHA

‘हिरण्यः पुरुषः’

BY KRISHNALAL

कृष्णलाल



SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

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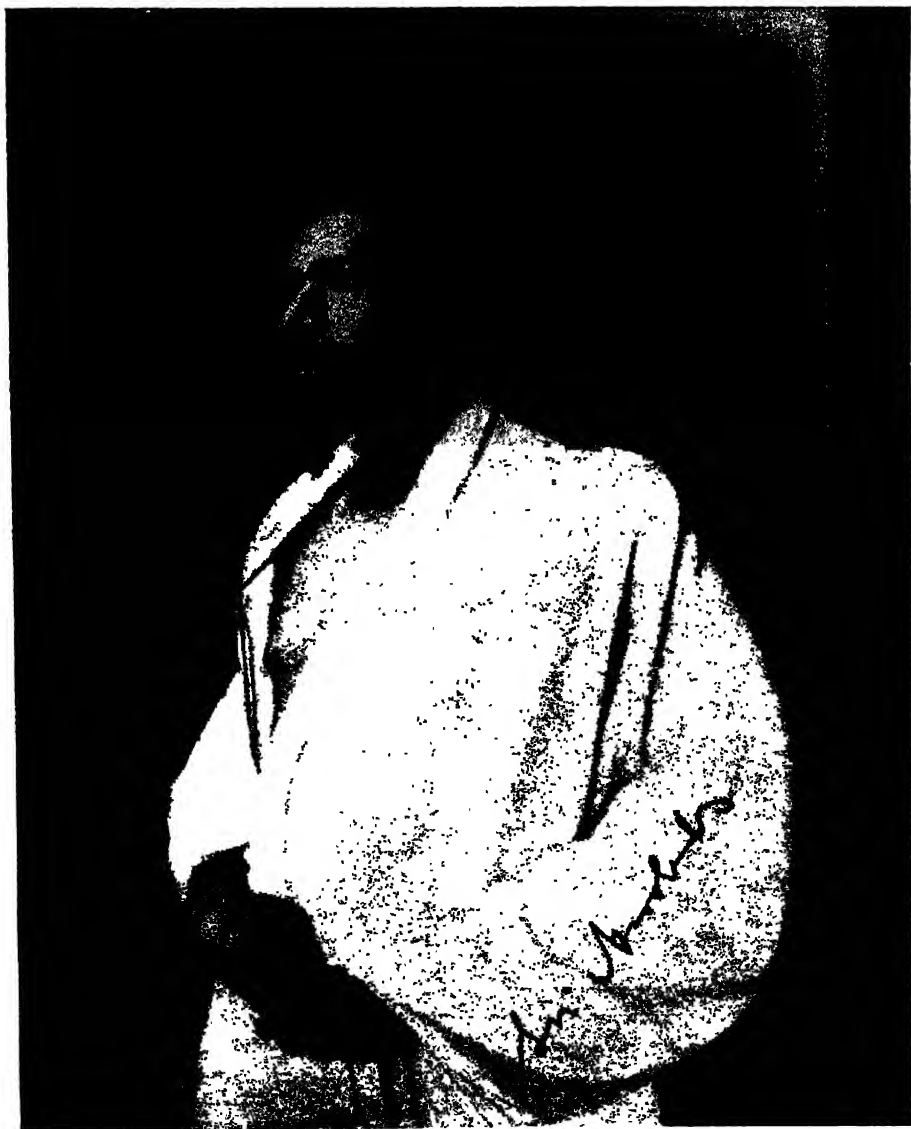
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The Mother



Sri Aurobindo

Section One

Savitri

“**A** GREAT Illusion, then, has built the stars.
But where then is the soul's security,
Its place in the circling of unreal suns?
Or where begins and ends Illusion's reign?
Perhaps the soul we feel is only a dream,
Eternal self a fiction sensed in trance.”

“Was then the sun a dream because there is night?
The Eternal lives hid in thy mortal heart:
He is curtained in the chamber of thy soul
In Light which pain and grief can never cross.
Outside the door they wait hungering for bliss.
A darkness hangs between thyself and him,
Thou canst not see the beatific Light,
Thou canst not hear or feel the marvellous Guest.
Where Ignorance is, there suffering too must come.
Thy grief is a cry of darkness to the Light;
Pain was the first-born of the Inconscience;
Already sleeps there its subconscious shape:
A shadow in its shadowy tenebrous womb,
It waits till life shall move, to wake and be.
In one caul with joy came forth its dreadful power.
Hiding its bright twin in life's breast it was born;
For pain came first, then only joy could be.
Pain ploughed the first hard ground of the world's drows;
By pain a spirit started from the clod,
By pain Life stirred in the subliminal deeps.
Interned, submerged, hidden in Matter's trance
Awoke to itself the dreamer, sleeping Mind;
It made a visible realm out of its dreams,

It drew its shapes from the subconscious depths,
Then turned to look upon the world it had made.
By pain and joy the bright and tenebrous twins
The inanimate world perceived its sentient soul,
Else had the Inconscient never suffered change.
Pain is the hammer of the gods to break
A dead resistance in the mortal's heart,
His slow inertia as of living stone.
If the heart were not forced to want and weep,
His soul would have lain down content, at ease,
And never thought to exceed the human start
And never learned to climb towards the Sun.
This earth is full of labour, packed with pain;
Throes of an endless birth are with her still;
The centuries end, the ages vainly pass
And yet the godhead in her is not born.
The ancient Mother faces all with joy,
Calls for the ardent pang, the grandiose thrill;
For with pain and labour all creation comes.
This earth is full of the anguish of the gods;
Ever they travail driven by Time's goad,
Striving to work out the eternal will
And shape the world divine in mortal forms.
His will they must work out in human breasts
Against the Evil that rises from the gulfs,
Against man's ignorance and his obstinate strength,
Against the deep folly of his human mind,
Against the blind reluctance of his heart.
Pain is the spirit's fate till man is free.
A cry arises like a moaning sea,
A clamour of battle and a tramp and march,
A desperate laughter under the blows of death,
A doom of blood and sweat and toil and tears.
Men die that man may live and God be born.
An awful Silence watches tragic Time.
Pain is the hand of Nature sculpturing men
To greatness: an inspired labour chisels
With heavenly cruelty an unwilling mould.
Implacable in the passion of their will,
Lifting the hammers of titanic toil

The demiurges of the universe work;
They shape with giant strokes their own; their sons
Are marked with their enormous stamp of fire.
Although the shaping god's tremendous touch
Is torture unbearable to mortal nerves,
The fiery spirit grows in strength within
And feels a joy in every titan pang.
He who would save himself lives bare and calm;
He who would save the race must share its pain:
This he shall know who obeys that grandiose urge.
The Great who came to save this suffering world
And rescue out of Time's shadow and the Law,
Must pass beneath the yoke of grief and pain;
They are caught by the Wheel that they had hoped to break,
On their shoulders they must bear man's load of fate.
Or they pay the gift of knowledge with their lives.
The Son of God born as the Son of man
Has drunk the bitter cup, owned Godhead's debt,
The debt the Eternal owes to the fallen mankind
His will has bound to death and struggling life
That yearns in vain for rest and endless peace.
Now is the debt paid, the score wiped off in full.
The Eternal's suffering in a human form
Has signed salvation's testament with his blood;
Opened are the doors of his undying peace.
The Deity compensates the creature's claim,
The Creator bears the law of pain and death;
A retribution smites the incarnate God.
By man's hate he has redeemed his love of men,
His love has paved the mortal's road to Heaven:
He has given his life and light to balance here
The dark account of mortal ignorance.
It is finished, the dread mysterious sacrifice.
His sacrificed body offered for the world,
Gethsemane and calvary his lot,
Carrying the cross on which man's soul is nailed,
Insult and jeer his right's sole acknowledgement,
Escorted by the curses of the crowd,
Two thieves slain with him to mock his mighty death,
He has trod with bleeding brow the Saviour's way.

Listen to the sage triumphant in his death!
 Hewn, quartered on the scaffold as he falls
 His crucified voice proclaims, 'I, I am God;
 'Yes, all is God,' peals back Heaven's deathless cry.
 If outer peace enrings and days immune,
 Yet when God's messenger comes to help and lead
 The aspirant soul of earth to higher things,
 He too must carry the yoke he came to unloose;
 All earth's disquietude he must make his.
 Exempt and unafflicted by earth's fate,
 How shall he heal the ills he never felt?
 Although to the outward eye is shown no sign
 Yet is the struggle there, the unseen price;
 The fire, the strife, the wrestle are within.
 He carries the suffering world in his own breast;
 Its sins weigh on his thoughts, its grief is his:
 The Titan adversary's clutch is felt;
 Earth's old grey load lies heavy on his soul;
 His march is a battle and a pilgrimage.
 Night and its powers beleaguer his tardy steps
 And smite him with life's evil and the world's pain:
 A million wounds gape in his secret heart.
 A sleepless journey in an endless night,
 A titan warfare is his inner life.
 Even worse may be the cost of direst pain
 Before the afflicting Power will loose its hold.
 His large identity and all-harbouring love
 May bring the cosmic anguish into his depths,
 The sorrow of all living things shall come
 To knock at his doors and live within his house;
 A dreadful cord of sympathy has tied
 All suffering into his single grief; it has made
 All agony in all the worlds his own.
 He is lashed with the whips of the antagonist Force;
 The weeping of the centuries visits his eyes:
 He wears the blood-glued fiery Centaur shirt,
 The poison of the world has stained his throat.
 In the market-place of Matter's capital
 Amidst the chafferings of the affair of life
 He is tied to the stake of the perennial Fire

And burns on the unseen original verge
That Matter may be turned to spirit stuff.
He is the victim in his own sacrifice.
The Immortal bound to earth's mortality,
Creating the moment by eternity's beats,
Appears and perishes on the roads of Time.
He dies that the world may be new-born and live.
Even if he has escaped the fiercest fires,
Even if the world comes not to break his work,
Not without struggle can God's work be done:
He must face the fight and pang who would conquer Hell.
In the human depths, in the hidden heart of Time
A dark concealed hostility has lodged
That claims the right to change and mar God's work.
A secret enmity ambushes the days:
Till it is slain peace cannot tread on earth.
There is no visible foe, only the unseen
Is round him, forces intangible besiege.
An adversary Force was born of old
Invading the life here of mortal man
And hiding from him his immortal path.
A power was given to veil the eternal Light,
A power to oppose God's secret will,
To contort the contours of the cosmic plan:
Its whispers lure to evil the human heart,
It seals up wisdom's eyes, the soul's regard,
It smites earth with calamity and pain.
This all must conquer who would bring down God's peace.
A hidden foe is lodged within man's breast
He must overcome or miss his higher fate.
This is the inner war without escape.

Hard is the world-redeemer's heavy task:
He sees the long march of Time, the little won;
A few are saved, the rest strive on or fail:
A Sun has passed, on earth Night's shadow falls.
Yes, there are happy ways near to God's sun;
But few are they who tread the sunlit path;
Only the pure in soul can walk in light.
An exit is shown, a road of hard escape

From the sorrow and the darkness and the chain;
But how shall a few escaped release the world?
The human mass lingers beneath the yoke.
Escape, however high, redeems not life,
Life that is left behind on a fallen earth.
Escape cannot uplift the abandoned race
Or bring to it victory and the reign of God.
A greater power must come, a larger light.
Although Light grows on earth and Night recedes,
Yet till the evil is slain in its own home
And Light invades the world's inconscient base
And perished has the adversary Force,
He still must labour on, his work half done.
One yet may come armoured, invincible;
No blow can bend his calm and victor head:
Calm and sure are his steps in the growing Night;
The goal recedes, he hurries not his pace,
He turns not to high voices in the Night;
He asks no aid from the inferior gods;
His eyes are fixed on his immutable aim.
Man turns aside or chooses easier paths;
He keeps to the one high and difficult road
That sole can climb to the eternal's peaks;
The ineffable planes already have felt his tread;
He has made heaven and earth his instruments,
But the limits fall from him of earth and heaven;
Their law he transcends and uses as his means.
He has seized life's hands and mastered his own heart.
This nature and its feints cannot deceive;
Fate's deaf resistance cannot break his will.
In the dreadful passages, the fatal paths
Invulnerable his soul, his heart unslain,
He lives through the opposition of earth's Powers
And Nature's ambushes and the world's attacks.
His spirit's stature transcending pain and bliss
He fronts evil and good with calm and equal eyes.
He too must grapple with the riddling Sphinx
And plunge into her long obscurity.
He has broken into the Inconscient's depths
That veil themselves even from their own regard:

He has seen God's slumber shape these magic worlds.
He has watched the dumb God fashioning Matter's frame,
Dreaming the dreams of its unknowing sleep,
And watched the unconscious Force that built the stars.
He has learnt the Inconscient's workings and its law,
Its incoherent thoughts and rigid acts,
Its hazard wastes of impulse and idea,
The chaos of its mechanic frequencies,
Its random calls, its whispers falsely true,
Misleaders of the hooded listening soul.
All things come to its ear but nothing abides;
All rose from the silence, all goes back to its hush.
Its somnolence founded the universe,
Its obscure waking makes the world seem vain.
Arisen from Nothingness and towards Nothingness turned,
Its dark and potent nescience was earth's start;
It is the waste stuff from which all was made:
Into its deeps creation can collapse.
Its opposition clogs the march of the soul,
It is the mother of our ignorance.
He must call light into its dark abysms,
Else never can Truth conquer Matter's sleep
And all earth look into the eyes of God.
All things obscure his knowledge must relume,
All things perverse his power must unknot,
He must pass to the other shore of falsehood's sea,
He must enter the world's dark to bring there light.
The heart of evil must be bared to his eyes,
He must learn its cosmic dark necessity,
Its right and its dire roots in Nature's soil.
He must know the thought that moves the demon act
And justifies the Titan in his pride:
He must enter the eternity of Night
And know God's darkness as he knows his Sun.
For this he must go down into the pit,
For this he must invade the dolorous Vasts.
Imperishable and wise and infinite,
He still must travel Hell the world to save.
Into the eternal Light he shall emerge,
On borders where all worlds meet and fulfil

Their secret law and heal their dissidence.
 There meet and clasp the eternal opposites,
 There pain becomes a violent fiery joy;
 Evil turns back to its original good,
 And sorrow lies upon the breasts of Bliss
 And learns to weep glad tears of happiness
 And the soft gaze of wistful ecstasy.
 Then shall be ended here the Law of Pain,
 Heaven's wisdom lodge within the mortal breast;
 The superconscient light shall touch men's eyes
 And the truth-conscious world envelop earth:
 Then shall the world-redeemer's task be done.

O mortal, bear this great world's law of pain;
 Leaning for thy support on Heaven's strength
 Turn towards high Truth, aspire to love and peace.
 Receive the joy lent to thee from above.
 Climb not to Godhead by the Titan's road,
 It clammers back and spirals to the abyss.
 The Titan rises on a stair of storms,
 By the clangour of his acts of might and pain,
 By his magnitude of hate and violence
 He feels in himself the greatness of a god:
 Power is his image of celestial self.
 The Titan's heart exults in dread and tears,
 He feeds his strength with his own and others' pain;
 His pride and force call in the struggle and pang
 And to cover his passion draws the Stoic's name.
 But thou, O mortal, bear, seek not the stroke,
 Too soon will grief and anguish find thee out.
 Yet bliss is there behind the world's face of tears.
 A power is in thee that thou knowest not;
 Thou art a vessel of the Eternal's spark
 That seeks relief from Time's envelopment,
 And while thou shutst it in, the seal is pain:
 Calm is self's victory overcoming fate.
 Pain signs the secret god denied by life:
 Unburdened by life's blind mystery of pain
 Bliss is the Godhead's crown, eternal, free.
 Bear; thou shalt find at last the road to bliss.

Of all that is the secret stuff is bliss,
 Even pain and grief are garbs of a world-delight
 That hides behind thy sorrow and thy cry.
 Because thy strength is a part and not God's whole
 And thy consciousness forgets to be divine
 And walks in the vague penumbra of the flesh
 And cannot bear the world's tremendous touch,
 Thou criest out and sayst that there is pain.
 Attire of the rapturous Dancer in the ways,
 Indifference, pain and joy, a triple disguise,
 Withold from thee the body of God's bliss.
 When thy spirit's strength shall make thee one with God,
 Thy agony shall change to ecstasy,
 Indifference pass into a rapturous calm
 And joy laugh nude on the peaks of the Absolute.
 O mortal who complainst of death and fate,
 Accuse not any of the harms thou bearest;
 This troubled world thou hast chosen for thy home
 And art thyself the author of thy pain.
 Once in the immortal boundlessness of Self,
 In its vast of Truth and Consciousness and Light
 The soul looked out from its felicity.
 It felt the Spirit's interminable bliss,
 It knew itself deathless, timeless, spaceless, one,
 It saw the Eternal, lived in the Infinite.
 Then, curious of a shadow thrown by Truth,
 It strained towards some otherness of self,
 An unknown face peering through the obscure night.
 It sensed a negative infinity,
 A void eternal whose immense excess
 Offered a ground for Nature's darkling birth
 And Matter's rigid hard unconsciousness
 Harboured the brilliance of a transient soul
 That lights our birth and death and ignorant life.
 A Mind arose that stared at Nothingness
 Till figures formed of what could never be;
 It housed the contrary of all that is.
 A Nought appeared as Being's huge sealed cause,
 Its dumb support in a blank infinite,
 In whose abyss spirit must disappear:

A darkened Nature abides and holds the seed
Of Spirit hidden and feigning not to be.
The eternal Consciousness became the home
Of an unsouled almighty Inconscient;
It lived no more as spirit's native air.
A stranger in the insentient universe,
Bliss was the incident of a mortal hour.
As one drawn by the grandeur of the Void
The soul attracted leaned to the Abyss:
It longed for the adventure of Ignorance
And the marvel and surprise of the Unknown
And the endless possibility that lurked
In the womb of Chaos and in Nothing's gulf
Or looked from the unfathomed eyes of Chance.
It tired of its unchanging happiness,
It turned away from immortality:
It was drawn to hazard's call and danger's charm,
It yearned to the pathos of grief, the drama of pain,
Peril of perdition and wounded bare escape,
The music of ruin and its glamour and crash,
The savour of pity and the gamble of love
And passion and the ambiguous face of Fate.
A clash of forces, a vast incertitude,
The joy of creation out of Nothingness,
A world of hard endeavour and difficult toil
And battle on extinction's perilous verge,
Strange meetings on the roads of Ignorance
And the companionship of half-known souls,
Or the solitary greatness and lonely force
Of a separate being conquering its world,
Called it from its too safe eternity.
A huge descent began, a giant fall:
For what the spirit sees, creates a truth
And what the soul imagines is made a world.
A Thought that leaped from the Timeless can become,
Indicator of cosmic consequence
And the itinerary of the gods,
A cyclic movement in eternal Time.
Thus came, born from a blind tremendous choice,
This great perplexed and discontented world,

This haunt of Ignorance, this home of Pain:
There are pitched desire's tents, grief's headquarters.
A vast disguise conceals the Eternal's bliss."

Ari Anandam

Section Two



A Letter from Sri Aurobindo on the Present Situation

I am afraid I can hold out but cold comfort for the present at least to those of your correspondents who are lamenting the present state of things. Things are bad, are growing worse and may at any time grow worst or worse than worst if that is possible—and anything however paradoxical seems possible in the present perturbed world. The best thing for them is to realise that all this was necessary because certain possibilities had to emerge and be got rid of if a new and better world was at all to come into being; it would not have done to postpone them for a later time. It is as in Yoga where things active or latent in the being have to be put into action in the light so that they may be grappled with and thrown out or to emerge from latency in the depths for the same purificatory purpose. Also they can remember the adage that night is darkest before dawn and that the coming of dawn is inevitable. But they must remember too that the new world whose coming we envisage is not to be made of the same texture as the old and different only in pattern and that it must come by other means, from within and not from without—so the best way is not to be too much preoccupied with the lamentable things that are happening outside, but themselves to grow within so that they may be ready for the new world whatever form it may take.

July 18, 1948

Sri Aurobindo

Letters of Sri Aurobindo

GOAL AND AIM

THE aim of the Yoga is to open the consciousness to the Divine, to live in the inner consciousness more and more while acting from it on the external life, to bring the inmost psychic into the front and by the power of the psychic to purify and change the being so that it may become ready for transformation and in union with the Divine Knowledge, Will and Love. Secondly, to develop the Yogic consciousness, i.e., to universalise the being in all the planes, become aware of the cosmic being and cosmic forces and be in union with the Divine on all the planes up to the Overmind. Thirdly, to come into contact with the transcendent Divine beyond the Overmind, through the supramental consciousness, supramentalise the consciousness and the nature and make oneself an instrument for the realisation of the Dynamic Divine Truth and its transforming descent into the earth-nature.

★ ★ ★

I do not know that there is anything like a Purushottama consciousness which the human being can attain or realise *for himself*; for, in the Gita, the Purushottama is the Supreme Lord, the Supreme Being who is beyond the Immutable and the Mutable and contains both the One and the Many. Man, says the Gita, can attain the Brahmic consciousness, realise himself as an eternal portion of the Purushottama and live in the Purushottama. The Purushottama consciousness is the consciousness of the Supreme Being and man by loss of ego and realisation of his true essence can *live in it*.

★ ★ ★

1. Loss of egoism—including all ambition (even “spiritual” ambition), pride, desire, self-centred life, mind, will.

2. Universalisation of the consciousness.
3. Absolute surrender to the transcendental Divine.

★ ★ ★

There can be no mental rule or definition. One has first to live in the Divine and attain to the Truth—the will and awareness of the Truth will organise the life.

It is in the inactive Brahman that one merges, if one seeks *laya* or *moksha*. One can dwell in the Personal Divine, but one does not merge in him. As for the Supreme Divine he holds in himself the world existence and it is in His consciousness that it moves, so by entering into the Supreme one rises above subjection to Nature, but one does not disappear from all consciousness of world existence.

The general Divine Will in the universe is for the progressive manifestation in the universe. But that is the general will—it admits the withdrawal of individual souls who are not ready to persevere in the world.

It is not immortality of the body, but the consciousness of immortality *in* the body that can come with the descent of Overmind into Matter or even into the physical mind or with the touch of the modified supramental Light on the physical mind-consciousness. These are preliminary openings, but they are not the supramental fulfilment in Matter.

If the Supramental is decreed, nothing can prevent it; but all things are worked out here through a play of forces, and an unfavourable atmosphere or conditions can delay even when they cannot prevent. Even when a thing is destined, it does not present itself as a certitude in the consciousness here (Overmind-mind-vital-physical) till the play of forces has been worked out up to a certain point at which the descent not only is, but appears as inevitable.

★ ★ ★

How to reconcile:

- (1) "Deliver the self by means of the Self" etc. Gita Chap. vi. 5.
- (2) "Abandon all dharmas" etc. Ibid. Chap. xviii. 66.

There is no real contradiction; the two passages indicate in the Gita's system two different movements of its Yoga, the complete surrender being the crowning movement. One has first to conquer the lower nature, deliver the self involved in the lower movement by means of the higher Self which rises into the divine nature; at the same time one offers all one's actions including the inner action of the Yoga as a sacrifice to the Purushottama,

the transcendent and immanent Divine. When one has risen into the higher Self, has the knowledge and is free, one makes the complete surrender to the Divine, abandoning all other dharmas, living only by the divine Consciousness, the divine Will and Force, the divine Ananda.

Our Yoga is not identical with the Yoga of the Gita although it contains all that is essential in the Gita's Yoga. In our Yoga we begin with the idea, the will, the aspiration of the complete surrender; but at the same time we have to reject the lower nature, deliver our consciousness from it, deliver the self involved in the lower nature by the self rising to freedom in the higher nature. If we do not do this double movement, we are in danger of making a tamasic and therefore unreal surrender, making no effort, no tapas and therefore no progress; or else we may make a rajasic surrender not to the Divine but to some self-made false idea or image of the Divine which masks our rajasic ego or something still worse.

★ ★ ★

The spiritual realisation can be had on any plane by contact with the Divine (who is everywhere) or by perception of the Self within which is pure and untouched by the outer movements. The Supermind is something transcendent—a dynamic Truth-consciousness which is not there yet, something to be brought down from above.

★ ★ ★

It is not possible to have the direct supramental working now. The adhar is not yet ready. First one must accept an indirect working which prepares the lower planes for the supramental change.

★ ★ ★

The consciousness which you call supramental is no doubt above the human mind, but it should be called, not the supramental, but simply the higher consciousness. In this higher consciousness there are many degrees, of which the supramental is the summit or the source. It is not possible to reach the summit or source all at once; first of all the lower consciousness has to be purified and made ready. That is the meaning of the Light you saw, whose inner body or substance is too dense and powerful to be penetrated at present.

★ ★ ★

He is using the word supermind too easily. What he describes as supermind is a highly illumined consciousness; a modified supramental light may touch it, but not the full power of the Supermind; and, in any case, it is not the Supermind. He speaks of a supramental part which is unreceptive—that is impossible, the supramental cannot be unreceptive. The Supermind is the Truth-Consciousness itself; it already possesses the Truth and does not even need to receive it. The word *vijnana* is sometimes used for the Higher illumined Intelligence in communication with the Truth, and this must be the part in himself which he felt—but this is not the Supermind. One can enter into Supermind only at the very end of the sadhana, when all difficulties have disappeared and there is no obstacle any longer in the way of the realisation.

★ ★ ★

The universe is certainly or has been up to now in appearance a rough and wasteful game with the dice of chance loaded in favour of the Powers of darkness, the Lords of obscurity, falsehood, death and suffering. But we have to take it as it is and find out—if we reject the way out of the old sages—the way to conquer. Spiritual experience shows that there is behind it all a wide terrain of equality, peace, calm, freedom, and it is only by getting into it that we can have the eye that sees and hope to gain the power that conquers.

★ ★ ★

All that is true Truth is the direct expression in one way or another of the Divine Consciousness. Life is the dynamic expression of Consciousness Force when thrown outward to realise itself in concrete harmonies of formation; Love is an intense self-expression of the soul of Ananda, and Light is what always accompanies the Supramental Consciousness and its most essential power.

★ ★ ★

It is the supramental Power that transforms mind, life and body—not the Sachchidananda consciousness which supports impartially everything. But it is by having experience of the Sachchidananda, pure existence-consciousness-bliss, that the ascent to the supramental and the descent of the supramental become (at a much later stage) possible. For first one must get free from the ordinary limitation by the mental, vital and physical formations,

and the experience of the Sachchidananda peace, calm, purity and wideness gives this liberation.

★ ★ ★

The supermind has nothing to do with passing into a blank. It is the Mind overpassing its own limits and following a negative and quietistic way to do it that reaches the big blank. The Mind, being the Ignorance, has to annul itself in order to enter into the supreme Truth—or, at least, so it thinks. But the supermind being the Truth-Consciousness and the Divine Knowledge has no need to annul itself for the purpose.

★ ★ ★

The supramental change is the ultimate stage of siddhi and it is not likely to come so soon; but there are many levels between the normal mind and the supermind and it is easy to mistake an ascent into one of them or a descent of their consciousness or influence for a supramental change.

It is quite impossible to ascend to the real Ananda *plane* (except in a profound trance), until after the supramental consciousness has been entered, realised and possessed; but it is quite possible and normal to feel some form of Ananda *consciousness* on any level. This consciousness wherever it is felt is a derivation from the Ananda plane, but it is very much diminished in power and modified to suit the lesser power of receptivity of the inferior levels.

★ ★ ★

The question arose and always arises because of an eagerness in the vital to take any stage of strong experience as the final stage, even to take it for the overmind, supermind, full siddhi. The supermind or the overmind either is not so easy to reach as that, even on the side of Knowledge or inner experience only. What you are experiencing belongs to the spiritualised and liberated mind. At this stage there may be intimations from the higher mind levels, but these intimations are merely isolated experiences, not a full change of consciousness. The supermind is not part of mind or a higher level of mind—it is something entirely different. No sadhak can reach the supermind by his own efforts and the effort to do it by personal tapasya has been the source of many mishaps. One has to go quietly stage by stage

until the being is ready and even then it is only the Grace that can bring the real supramental change.

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The realisation of the Spirit comes long before the development of Overmind or Supermind; hundreds of sadhaks in all times have had the realisation of the Atman in the higher mental planes, *buddheh paratah*, but the supramental realisation was not theirs. One can get partial realisations of the Self or Spirit or the Divine on any plane, mental, vital, physical even, and when one rises above the ordinary mental plane of man into a higher and larger mind, the Self begins to appear in all its conscious wideness.

It is by full entry into this wideness of the Self that cessation of mental activity becomes possible; one gets the inner Silence. After that this inner Silence can remain even when there is activity of any kind; the being remains silent within, the action goes on in the instruments, and one receives all the necessary initiations and execution of action whether mental, vital or physical from a higher source without the fundamental peace and calm of the Spirit being troubled.

The Overmind and Supermind states are something yet higher than this; but before one can understand them, one must first have the self-realisation, the full action of the spiritualised mind and heart, the psychic awakening, the liberation of the imprisoned consciousness, the purification and entire opening of the adhar. Do not think now of those ultimate things (Overmind, Supermind), but get first these foundations in the liberated nature.

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This transformation cannot be done individually or in a solitary way only. No individual solitary transformation unconcerned with the work for the earth (which means more than any individual transformation) would be either possible or useful. (Also no individual human being can by his own power alone work out the transformation, nor is it the object of the Yoga to create an individual superman here and there). The object of the Yoga is to bring down the supramental consciousness on earth, to fix it there, to create a new race with the principle of the supramental consciousness governing the inner and outer individual and collective life.

That force accepted by individual after individual according to their preparation would establish the supramental consciousness in the physical world and so create a nucleus for its own expansion.

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It is quite possible that there have been periods of harmony on different levels, not supramental, which were afterwards disturbed—but that could only be a stage or resting place in an arc of spiritual evolution out of the Inconscience.

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Hostile Forces. The purpose they serve *in the world* is to give a full chance to the possibilities of the Inconscience and Ignorance—for this world was meant to be a working out of these possibilities with the supramental harmonisation as its eventual outcome. The life and work developing here in the Ashram has to deal with the world problem and has therefore to meet, it could not avoid, the conflict with the working of the hostile Powers in the human being.

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To speak of “receiving power from the supramental when we are not conscious” is strange. When one is not conscious, one can still receive a *higher* force, the Divine Shakti works often from behind the veil, otherwise in the ignorant and unconscious condition of the human being she would not be able to work at all. But the nature of the force or action is modified to suit the condition of the sadhak. One must develop a very full consciousness before one can receive anything from the direct supramental Power and one must be very advanced in consciousness even to receive something of it modified through the Overmind or other intermediate region.

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This Yoga does not mean a rejection of the powers of life, but an inner transformation and a change of the spirit in the life and the use of the powers. These powers are now used in an egoistic spirit and for undivine ends; they have to be used in a spirit of surrender to the Divine and for the pur-

poses of the divine Work. That is what is meant by conquering them back for the Mother.

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As for what you write about your experience and your ideas, it looks as if it were simply the old thoughts and movements rising, as they often do, to interfere with the straight course of the sadhana. Mental realisations and ideas of this kind are at best only half-truths and not always even that; once one has taken up a sadhana that goes beyond the mind, it is a mistake to give them too much importance. They can easily become by misapplication a fruitful ground for error.

If you examine the ideas that have come to you, you will see that they are quite inadequate. For example:

1. Matter is *jada* only in appearance. As even modern Science admits, Matter is only energy in action, and, as we know in India, energy is force of consciousness in action.

2. Prakriti in the material world seems to be *jada*, but this too is only an appearance. Prakriti is in reality the conscious power of the Spirit.

3. A bringing down of the Spirit into Matter cannot lead to a *laya* in *jada prakriti*. A descent of the Spirit could only mean a descent of light, consciousness and power, not a growth of unconsciousness and inertia which is what is meant by the *jada laya*.

4. The Spirit is there already in matter as everywhere else; it is only a surface apparent unconsciousness or involved consciousness which veils its presence. What we have to do is to awake matter to the spiritual consciousness concealed in it.

5. What we aim at bringing down into the material world is the supramental consciousness, light and energy, because it is this alone that can truly transform it.

If there is at any time a growth of unconsciousness and inertia, it is because of the resistance of the ordinary nature to the spiritual change. But this is usually raised up in order to be dealt with and eliminated. If it is allowed to remain concealed and not raised up, the difficulty will never be grappled with and no real transformation will take place.

The idea of usefulness to humanity is the old confusion due to secondhand ideas imported from the West. Obviously, to be "useful" to humanity there is no need of Yoga; everyone who leads the human life is useful to humanity in one way or another.

Yoga is directed towards God, not towards man. If a divine supramental consciousness and power can be brought down and established in the material world, that obviously would mean an immense change for the earth including humanity and its life. But the effect on humanity would only be one result of the change; it cannot be the object of the sadhana. The object of the sadhana can only be to live in the divine consciousness and to manifest it in life.

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The true object of the Yoga is not philanthropy, but to find the Divine, to enter into the divine consciousness and find one's true being (which is not the ego) in the Divine.

The "Ripus" cannot be conquered by *damana*, (even if it succeeds to some extent, it only keeps them down but does not destroy them); often compression only increases their force. It is only by purification through the Divine Consciousness entering into the egoistic nature and changing it that this thing can be done.

If he gives himself from deep within and is absolutely persevering in the Way, then only can he succeed.

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This world *is*, as the Gita describes it, *anityamasukham* (IX.33.) so long as we live in the present world-consciousness; it is only by turning from that to the Divine and entering into the Divine Consciousness that one can possess, through the world also, the Eternal.

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The language of the Gita in many matters seems sometimes contradictory because it admits two apparently opposite truths and tries to reconcile them. It admits the ideal of departure from *samsara* into the Brahman as one possibility; also it affirms the possibility of living free in the Divine (in Me, it says) and acting in the world as the *jivanmukta*. It is this latter kind of solution on which it lays the greatest emphasis. So Ramakrishna put the "divine souls" (Ishwarakoti) who can descend the ladder as well as ascend it higher than the Jivas (Jivakoti) who once having ascended, have not the strength to descend again for divine work. The full

truth is in the supramental consciousness and the power to work from there on life and matter.

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The Divine can be and is everywhere, masked or half-manifest or beginning to be manifest, in all the planes of consciousness; in the Supramental it begins to be manifest without disguise or veil in its own *swarupa*.

When the soul is looking from behind, it makes use very often of a very slight coincidence to push the mind and vital into the way.

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Shiva is the Lord of Tapas. The power is the power of Tapas.

Krishna as a godhead is the Lord of Ananda, Love and Bhakti; as an incarnation, he manifests the union of wisdom (jnana) and works and leads the earth-evolution through this towards union with the Divine by Ananda, Love and Bhakti.

The Devi is the Divine Shakti—the Consciousness and Power of the Divine, the Mother and Energy of the worlds. All powers are hers. Sometimes Devi-power may mean the power of the universal World-Force; but this is only one side of the Shakti.

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Man and the Gods

BY NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

I

THE Earth symbolises and epitomises material Nature. It is the body and substance, the very personification, of unconsciousness—Ignorance carried to the last limit and concretised. It represents, figures the very opposite of the Reality at the summit. The supreme and original Reality is the quaternary: (1) Light, (2) Truth, (3) Love and (4) Life. They are the first and primal godheads with whom creation starts and who preside over the whole play of the manifestation. These gods that emanated out of the supreme consciousness of the Divine Mother as her fundamental aspects and personalities had automatically an absolute freedom of action and movement, otherwise they would not be divine personalities. And this freedom could be exercised and was in fact exercised in cutting the tie with the mother consciousness, in order to follow a line of independent and separate development instead of a merger life of solidarity with the Supreme. The result was immediate and drastic—the precipitation of a physical life and an earthly existence which negated the very principles of the original nature of the godheads and brought forth exactly their contraries: instead of Light there brooded Darkness and Inconscience, Truth turned to Falsehood, Love and Delight gave place to Hatred and Suffering and finally, instead of Life and Immortality there appeared Death. That was how separation, “the disobedience” of the Bible, caused the distortion that turned the gods into Asuras, that was how Lucifer became Satan.

And that was how Paradise was lost. But the story of Paradise Regained is yet more marvellous. When the Divine Mother, the creative infinite Consciousness found herself parcelled out and scattered (even like the body of Sati borne about by Shiva, in the well-known Indian legend) and lost in unconsciousness, something shot down from the Highest into the lowest, something in response to an appeal, a cry, as it were, from the depth of the utter hopelessness in the heart of Matter and the Inconscient. A dumb last-minute S. O. S from below—a *De profundis clamavit*—went forth and the Grace descended: the Supreme himself came down.

and entered into the scuttled dead particles of earth's dust as a secret core of light and flame, just a spark out of its own conscious substance. The Earth received the Grace and held it in her bosom. Thus she had her soul born in her—the psychic being that is to grow and evolve and bring about her redemption, her transmutation into the divine substance.

This is the special privilege accorded to earth, viz, she has a soul, a spark consciousness imbedded in her unconscious substance that came from the highest summit, from the supreme Divine himself. And thus earth became the representative, the personified form of the material universe; she became the mouthpiece of the extended universe, the head and front of creation, so that in and through her the supreme manifestation, the incarnation of the Divine may take place.

The Earth has come out of the universe, has evolved out of it as a distinct entity, carrying and developing within it the end, the purpose for which God created the world out of Himself. And as the earth epitomises the universe and becomes the instrument and channel of an evolutionary manifestation, even so man takes up within himself the earthly life and leads it to the high fulfilment intended for it. Earth is there as the home of man, as his mother and nurse; she has fashioned man out of her substratum and is seeking through him the release, the growth and expression of her secret consciousness.

II

The purpose of man's existence upon earth is the growth of his consciousness. Each human being is a soul, a psyche, a spark from the Spirit sent down into Matter, a ray from the Divine Light descended upon earth and housed in a physical body. The spark, the ray is to attain the amplitude and splendour of its original form in the divine consciousness, to express that plenitude here below. This original, the archetype of each and every individual embodied upon earth is the central being, Jivatman. At the beginning the individual soul in terrestrial evolution is just a tiny particle of consciousness: it evolves, that is to say, grows and increases in stature and potency, through a series of lives upon this earth, each life bringing its quota of experience that serves to tend the flame. When the soul has thus grown and finally reached its optimum, and is in union with its original and archetype in the fullness of self-expression, what next? What is its destiny thereafter, how does it live or move henceforward?

Three courses are open to the perfected and completely developed soul.

First, it may remain, contented with its fullness, self-gathered and self-sufficient, dwelling in its own domain—the psychic world—and enjoying the even equal undisturbed felicity and beatitude of union with the Divine. This status may perhaps not be chosen by many or for a long time. The second line that the Psyche can adopt is to come down or remain upon earth and take a share in the fulfilment of the Divine Purpose in the world. That purpose is the transformation of the physical, making the material an embodiment of the divine Light and Power and Bliss and Immortality. A third development also may take place; this is not strictly speaking normal, not the logical and inevitable happening in the course of things, nor does it depend wholly upon any personal choice of the psychic being, so to say. It occurs when the force of a higher destiny operates, for a special work and at a special time. It is when the psychic being is contacted with, made to identify itself with, a godhead under a higher dispensation, when, in a word, a divinity descends into a human soul.

The gods are especial powers and executive agents of the one Divine. They move and act in a special way with a special end in view. They are, we may say, high-brow entities: they carry things with a high hand. That is to say, what they have got to do, they seek to do without any consideration or computation of the means, without regard to the pauses and hindrances that naturally attend all terrestrial and human achievements. God said, let there be light, and there was light. That is also the way of the gods. There is here an imperial majesty and grandeur, a sweeping mastery and sovereign indifference

Remote from the Force that cries out in pain *

and Above joy and sorrow is that grandeur's walk *

The gods possess this high quality of crystal purity, of a concentrated seeing will in which vision and execution form one single simultaneous movement, of the taut yet perfectly serene rhythm of a hero-consciousness. Something of that grandiose sweep of godly march—the Virgilian *gradus divi*—is echoed in these Vedic lines hymned to Varuna:

Adabdhāni varunasya vratāni vicakāśaccandramā naktameti

“The moon comes out in the night revealing the inviolable workings of Varuna.”

Such are the gods, Such is their nature:
The Spirit's free and absolute potencies
Burn in the solitude of the thought of God *

and Unmoved by cry of revolt and ignorant prayer
They reckon not our virtue and our sin,
They bend not to the voices that implore. *

Human nature, human movement, is, however, different. Man, the terrestrial creature has developed, as the result of a slow growth, through struggle and suffering, the *sturm und drang* of an arduous ascent. He knows of things which the gods do not. He has an experience which even they, strange to say, covet. First of all it must be borne in mind that the gods represent only one mode of consciousness, a fixed and definite type—a god is bound by his godhood; but man embodies all the modes of consciousness, he is an ever growing and changing type. Man is an epitome of creation, he is coterminous with Nature. If he is that within which is wholly divine—consciousness and bliss, truth and immortality—phenomenally he is also quite the opposite—earthly, unconsciousness, pain and suffering, ignorance and falsehood, incapacity and death. If heaven is his father, the earth is his mother—*dyaus me pitā mātā prithivīriyam*. And all the gradation in between he has in him and can become any.

Man possesses characters that mark him as an entity *sui generis* and give him the value that is his. First, toil and suffering and more failures than success have given him the quality of endurance and patience, of humility and quietness. That is the quality of earth-nature—earth is always spoken of by the poets and seers as all-bearing and all-forgiving. She never protests under any load put upon her, never rises in revolt, never in a hurry or in worry, she goes on with her appointed labour silently, steadily, calmly, unflinchingly. Human consciousness can take infinite pains, go through the infinite details of execution, through countless repetitions and mazes: patience and perseverance are the very badge and blazon of the tribe. Ribhus, the artisans of immortality—children of Mahasaraswati—were originally men, men who have laboured into godhood. Human nature knows to wait, wait infinitely, as it has all the eternity before it and can afford and is prepared to continue and persist life after life. I do not say that all men can do it and are of this nature; but there is this essential capacity in human nature. [The gods, who are usually described as the very

embodiment of calmness and firmness, of a serene and concentrated will to achieve, nevertheless suffer ill any delay or hindrance to their work. Man has not perhaps the even tenor, the steadiness of their movement, even though intense and fast flowing; but what man possesses is persistence through ups and downs—his path is rugged with rise and fall, as the poet says. The steadiness or the staying power of the gods contains something of the nature of indifference, something hard in its grain, not unlike a crystal or a diamond. But human patience, when it has formed and taken shape, possesses a mellowness, an understanding, a sweet reasonableness and a resilience all its own. And because of its intimacy with the tears of things, because of its long travail and calvary, human consciousness is suffused with a quality that is peculiarly human and humane—that of sympathy, compassion, comprehension, the psychic feeling of closeness and oneness. The gods are, after all, egoistic; unless in their supreme supramental status where they are one and identical with the Divine himself, on the lower levels, in their own domains, they are separate, more or less immiscible entities, as it were; greater stress is laid here upon their individual functioning and fulfilment than upon their solidarity. Even if they have not the egoism of the Asuras that sets itself in revolt and antagonism to the Divine, still they have to the fullest extent the sense of a separate mission that each has to fulfil, which none else can fulfil and so each is bound rigidly to its own orbit of activity. There is no mixture in their workings—*na methate*, as the Vedas say; the conflict of the later gods, the apple of discord that drove each to establish his hegemony over the rest, as narrated in the mythologies and popular legends, carry the difference to a degree natural to the human level and human modes and reactions. The egoism of the gods may have the gait of aristocracy about it, it has the aloofness and indifference and calm non-chalance that go often with nobility: it has a family likeness to the egoism of an ascetic, of a saint—it is *sātvic*; still it is egoism. It may prove even more difficult to break and dissolve than the violent and ebullient rajasic pride of a vital being. Human failings in this respect are generally more complex and contain all shades and rhythms. And yet that is not the whole or dominant mystery of man's nature. His egoism is thwarted at every step—from outside, by the force of circumstances, the force of counter egoisms, and from inside, for there is there the thin little voice that always cuts across egoism's play and takes away from it something of its elemental blind momentum. The gods know not of this division in their nature, this schizophrenia, as the malady is termed nowadays, which is the source of the eternal strain of melancholy in human nature of which Matthew Arnold speaks, of the Shelleyan

saddest thoughts: Nietzsche need not have gone elsewhere in his quest for the origin and birth of Tragedy. A Socrates discontented, the Christ as the Man of Sorrows, and Amitabha, the soul of pity and compassion are peculiarly human phenomena. They are not merely human weaknesses and failings that are to be brushed aside with a godlike disdain; but they contain and yield a deeper sap of life and out of them a richer fulfilment is being elaborated.

Human understanding, we know, is a tangled skein of light and shade—more shade perhaps than light—of knowledge and ignorance, of ignorance straining towards knowledge. And yet this limited and earthly frame that mind is has something to give which even the overmind of the gods does not possess and needs. It is indeed a frame, even though perhaps a steel frame, to hold and fix the pattern of knowledge, that arranges, classifies, consolidates effective ideas, as they are translated into facts and events. It has not the initiative, the creative power of the vision of a god, but it is an indispensable aid, a precious instrument for the canalisation and expression of that vision, for the intimate application of the divine inspiration to physical life and external conduct. If nothing else, it is a sort of blue print which an engineer of life cannot forego if he has to execute his work of building a new life accurately and beautifully and perfectly.

III

We have spoken of the stability, the fixity, the rigidity even of the godtype and we contrasted it with the variability, the many-sidedness, the multiple character of the human consciousness. In another view, however the tables are turned and the opposite appears as the truth. Man, for example, has a physical body and nothing is more definite and fixed and rigid than this material sheath. The gods have no body, but they have a form which is supple and changeful, not hard and crystallised like the human figure, Gods, we said, are cosmic forces—lines (or vectors, if we wish to be scientifically precise) of universal forces; this does not mean that they have no shape or form. They too have a form and can be recognised by it even as a human being is recognisable by his body. In spite of variability the form retains its identity. The form changes, for a god has the capacity to act in different contexts at the same time; within his own universe a god is multi-dimensional. The Indian seer and artist often seeks to convey this character of the immortals by giving them a plurality of arms and heads. In modern times the inspiration behind the surrealist movement lies precisely in this attempt to

express a simultaneity of diverse gestures and activities, a synthetic closeup of succeeding moments and disparate objects or events. But inspite of all changes Proteus remains Proteus and can be recognised as such by the vigilant and careful eye. The human frame, we have said, is more fixed and rigid, being made of the material substance. It has not evidently the variability of the body of a god. And yet there is a deeper mystery: the human body is not or need not be so inflexible as it appears to be or as it usually is. It has considerable plastic capacities. We would say that the human body holds a marvellous *juste milieu*. By its solid concreteness it acts as a fortress for the inner consciousness to dwell in safe from easy attacks of the hostiles: it acts also as a firm weapon for the same inner consciousness to cut into the material world and indent and impress its pattern of truth upon an otherwise hard and refractory material made of ignorance and obscurity and falsehood. Furthermore, it is supple enough to receive and record into its grain the pattern and substance of the higher reality. The image of the transubstantiation of bread and wine into the flesh and blood of Christ is symbolic of the alchemy of which the human body is capable when one knows how to treat it in occult knowledge and power. The human body can suffer a sea change which is not within the reach of the radiant body of an immortal.

IV

Divine Love is something aloof, apart, beyond. Even then it is there behind supporting, animating, helping all and every thing. It is indeed the secret Delight in things. It is the sense of utter identity of self and self. Its status is in the Transcendent where Love and Life and Light are fused together into one single absolute reality. When it expresses itself, that is to say, when it makes its presence felt as such in its supreme nature, it seems almost like indifference, so calm and tranquil and poised it is, wide and vast and far and away, unlike anything human. Indeed human consciousness would view it almost as heartlessness. It has the non-humanity of which AE speaks in those famous lines

Like winds or waters were her ways:
 They heed not immemorial cries;
 They move to their high destinies
 Beyond the little voice that prays.

or to which Victor Hugo gives a very similar expression

Nos destins ténébreux vont sous des lois immenses
 Que rien ne déconcerte et que rien n'attendrit.
 Vous ne pouvez avoir de subites clémences
 Qui dérangent le monde, ô Dieu, tranquille esprit! *

This is the divine love, love proper to Maheshwari. But there is another love more intimate, close, human—the love of Mahalakshmi. This is the love that comes down here upon earth and takes on an earthly quality, a terrestrial vibration. In other words, it has what we call the psychic quality that characterises the human feeling with its peculiar charm and sweetness and intensity and magic. It goes without saying that by human we do not mean here the gross human thing which is more animal than human, a matter of the external heart, made up of crude passion and egoistic demand, but that which is the truth of all this deviation and deformation, lying behind in the inner heart. The psychic being is a special creation in and for earth, in and for man, the earthly creature. It is, as we have said, divine Grace imbedded in Matter.

The gods are glorious beings; they are aspects and personalities of the Divine, presiding and ruling over the cosmic laws, each with his own truth and norm and dominion, although, in the higher status, all work together and harmoniously. Even then they do not possess a soul, a psychic core of being. They are forms and powers of consciousness organised round a divine truth, a typical Idea; but they do not have this exquisite presence secretly seated in the heart, which is the privilege of the terrestrial creature.

And the exquisiteness, the special quality of this inner Heart is mostly if not wholly derived from a particular factor of terrestrial evolution. For the journey here is a sacrifice, a passage through pain and suffering, even through frustration and death. The tears that accompany the mortal being in his calvary of an earthly life serve precisely as a holy unction of purification, give a sweet intensity to all his urges in the progressive march to Resurrection. This is the Immanent Divine who has to be worshipped and realised as much as the Transcendent Divine, if man is to fulfil himself wholly and earth justify its existence.

The legend of the great ascetic Sankaracharya going straight to the realisation of the Supreme knowledge in Brahman but obliged to come down and enter into another earthly body for the experience of love, even earthly love, in order to complete his realisation is instructive and illustrates our point.

* Our dark destinies move under vast laws that nothing diverts, nothing softens. Thou canst not have sudden clemencies that disturb the world, O God, Spirit tranquil,

As the human aspiration is to reach out towards divinity, the gods too at times are not satisfied with their closed divine status. They lean down to help humanity, to bring it up into their consciousness; but also they seek this contact and unification for their own sake, for a change and transformation in themselves; they may seek to rise further in a higher status of consciousness or they may wish to participate in the earthly travail, in the human endeavour. In either case the channel lies through the human consciousness. In the Vedas the gods always look to men, almost depend upon them for their own fulfilment and enrichment. Men ask the gods for wealth and plenty—material as well as spiritual—the gods too ask from men the sacrifice, the sacrifice that pours out the substance of the human reality upon which they feed and grow. The Gita speaks of the same covenant—the interchange of gifts between the two, each increasing the other and both attaining the highest good.

Immortality— Psychic, Spiritual and Material

BY HARIDAS CHAUDHURI

THE idea of immortality is as fascinating to the human heart as it is baffling to the human intellect. It belongs to that group of problems which have ever been in the forefront of philosophic speculation. If philosophic reflection springs from the contemplation of death, it issues in the affirmation of immortality as the basic reality, of which death is but a shadow. If the spiritual search after Truth starts as a recoil from the perpetual perishing that our life in the world is, it culminates in the discovery of the imperishable Spirit of which the flux of existence is a field of manifestation. Now, if immortality (*Amritam*) is the supreme truth and if the world is the rhythmic manifestation of the immortal Spirit, then Life must be, in its deepest essence, an unceasing effort to conquer death and to express the full glory of the Spirit on the basis of that conquest.

In Sri Aurobindo's philosophy we come across a threefold conception of immortality. In the first place, the Spirit in all His different aspects as transcendence, universality and individuality—as Brahman, Iswara and Jivatman—is immortal. The Spirit is immortal in the sense of being non-temporal. This is what may be called spiritual immortality, which does not connote unending persistence in time but a sort of ineffable timeless being. In the second place, there is something in man which survives death and carries him from birth to birth along the road of gradual spiritual unfoldment. This death-defying element in the evolving nature of man is what Sri Aurobindo has called the Psychic Being. It is the highest representative of the Jivatman in man. The persistence in time of the psychic being through birth and rebirth is what may be called psychic immortality. In the third place, Sri Aurobindo believes that even our embodied material existence is capable of being transmuted into an image of immortality. That would be material immortality, and would imply the final triumph of Life over death. In Sri Aurobindo's view, material immortality is indeed the secret purpose of our terrestrial evolution and of the gradual self-perfecting of our nature under the guidance of the Psychic Being. We propose to develop

here this threefold conception of immortality on a comparative and critical basis.

PSYCHIC IMMORTALITY

The idea of Rebirth is a characteristically Hindu conception. Christian thought contemptuously rejects the notion of pre-existence of the soul. It believes no doubt in post-existence, but that post-existence is construed in terms of an existence in spheres of being other than our terrestrial life. The soul leaves the body at death, and with the body the earth also, once for all. Having completed its earthly sojourn, it enters into supra-terrestrial or infra-terrestrial planes of existence. In Plato, we have the idea of pre-existence of the soul, but that pre-existence is construed in terms of some sort of celestial existence from which earthly life is a deplorable fall. In the whole of Western philosophy, there is only one great philosopher, namely, Dr. McTaggart, who takes up in earnest the idea of Rebirth, accepts both the pre-existence and the post-existence of the soul, and envisages such existence as recurrent earthly embodiments of the Spirit. Every individual Self is, in his view, an eternally self-subsistent spirit, essentially timeless in his experience. It is therefore natural that the individual Self's self-expression in and through the time-process, which is a *phenomenon bene fundatum*, should assume the form of a vastly long chain of repeated births occupying the whole of time. The eternity or timelessness of the Spirit, when translated in terms of time, is bound to assume the form of immortal existence running through a long succession of births. The empirical self slowly and steadily advances through this succession of births towards the all-embracing timeless perception that belongs to the transcendental Self. The transcendental Self may be said to preside over the evolutionary march of the empirical self. But is there any factor in the constitution of the evolving empirical self which can be said to persist through the entire evolutionary march in time? At the early stages of development, no enduring vital or mental personality can be formed. So, even though the vital and mental sheaths may be developed to the extent of being capable of surviving the destruction of the body, they cannot profitably be carried over into the next birth. They are dissolved in the vital and mental planes in the course of the individual's brief stay in those planes. As Sri Aurobindo points out, it is the psychic being that survives the death of the body and also the dissolution of the vital and mental sheaths, and then goes to the psychic plane for a thorough re-arrangement of past experiences and the final determination of the next birth. It is the psychic being that descends into the evolution of the empirical self, evolves

with it, sustains and secretly guides from within the physical, vital and mental elements of its nature, and serves as the central representative within the evolving empirical self of the transcendental Individual Self. As the spark of the Divine in the evolving creature, the psychic being secretly guides the individual through a long succession of births towards the realisation of the transcendental Self as an eternal portion of the Divine Being and as a centre of working of the Divine Shakti. So, immortality in the sense of durational continuation of existence or persistence throughout the temporal evolutionary flux belongs to the psychic being. This is what may be called psychic immortality.

The psychic immortality in the sense indicated above has little affinity with what Dr. G. D. Broad of the Cambridge University has called the persistence of the psychic factor. On an examination of such supernormal psychical phenomena as mediumistic phenomena, multiple personality, cross-correspondence, etc., and other remarkable findings of the Society for Psychical Research in regard to such phenomena, Dr. Broad has developed what he styles the Compound Theory of the Mind. In his view, the mind as we know it has no independent existence apart from the body which it animates. It is an emergent compound product which springs into being on the combination of two factors; one is the bodily factor or the highly developed human organism, and the other is the psychic factor which is less than the mind in so far as it does not possess the characteristic qualities and functions of the mind. The specifically mental features are emergent in character in so far as they cannot be resolved into the powers and qualities of the body or into those of the psychic element. The mind emerges into existence when the body and psychic factor suitably combine, just as water emerges into being when hydrogen and oxygen combine in definite proportions. Dr. Broad maintains that on the death of the body the psychic factor continues to exist and seems capable of being united with other suitably developed organisms. It carries modifications due to experiences that happened to the deceased person. In mediumistic phenomena, the psychic factor of a dead person is temporarily united with the body of the entranced medium resulting in the formation of what Broad calls a "mindkin" (a little temporary mind) which lasts just as long as the medium remains in trance. In the opinion of Mr. Broad, what happens after death is not the survival of the Person or the mind, but only the persistence of the psychic factor which is a constituent, a less-than-mental constituent, of the compound mental entity.*

*Mind and its place in Nature, p. 539

It will be evident from the above account of the psychic factor as postulated by Dr. Broad that it differs *toto caelo* from what has been designated the psychic being in the foregoing pages. The psychic factor is inferior to the mind in so far as it is devoid of specifically mental characteristics; the psychic being is far superior to the mind in so far as it is intrinsically immortal and is the central representative of the undying Self in the heart of the evolving individual. The psychic factor is a constituent of the mind which is jointly dependent upon it and the bodily factor; the psychic being belongs to an altogether different order of reality from the mind, because, while the mind is a modification of Nature or Prakriti, the psychic being is the central (*chaitya*) Purusha, the spiritual Individual, within us. Seated in our heart, the psychic being sustains the mind as well as the physical and vital parts, and secretly controls them from within. The psychic factor is said to persist after the death of the body, but Dr. Broad is silent over the question whether it also existed before birth, and if so, what was its precise mode of pre-existence. The psychic being, essentially immortal that it is, has undoubtedly both pre-existence and post-existence, and it survives from birth to birth whether or no covered by the vital and mental sheaths. Sri Aurobindo holds that it is possible even for our life and mind, the vital and mental personalities, to be so much developed in the course of evolution as to merit survival, so that the psychic being sees no further necessity for dissolving them and forming new personalities for the sake of further progress. The central objective of terrestrial evolution is indeed this, that our life and mind and even our body should, as a result of gradual progression through birth and rebirth, put on the immortality and the divinity of the Spirit, eventually culminating in what has been called terrestrial immortality.

Furthermore, Dr. Broad has held that the psychic factor is incapable of isolated and independent existence for any considerable length of time apart from some organism. It follows that after the death of a man, the psychic factor, in order to persist, must get related from time to time to other suitably developed organisms. In consequence, we have the phenomena of multiple personality, cross-correspondence, entranced medium, etc. In Dr. Broad's conception of the persistence of the psychic factor, there is, however, no idea of rebirth. It is needless to mention that the psychic being, as Integral Idealism conceives it, is independent not only of material organisms, but also of the vital and mental factors. Consequently, the psychic being survives not only the destruction of the body, but also the dissolution of the vital and mental sheaths, after which it goes to the psychic plane and prepares for rebirth with a view to carrying forward the process of spiritual evolution.

SPIRITUAL IMMORTALITY

Material immortality is, as remarked above, the final goal of the evolutionary advance of Nature. The immortality of the psychic being is essential for the gradual perfecting of our nature through birth and rebirth until the goal is reached. But all forms of immortality must ultimately flow from the essential nature of the Spirit. The psychic being persists through the succession of births, because it is the Spirit's representative within the flux of evolution. When an individual's spiritual evolution reaches its consummation, the psychic being gets united with the Individual Self which is without birth and without death, and which, unaffected by the mutations of evolution, presides over it from above. Material organisms, representing as they do an imperfect solution of Nature's problem of bringing into harmonious union matter and life or matter and spirit, are extremely unstable and transitory. But a perfect solution of the problem of harmony is possible of attainment when the organic structure comes to be thoroughly penetrated by the Spirit and is turned into a flawless image thereof through the transforming activity of the dynamic Truth-Consciousness. We can achieve immortality in our lower nature and on the physical plane to the extent we allow the Spirit to impart something of its essential immortality and divinity to the lower members of our being. Everything therefore depends upon the intrinsic nature of the Spirit in which immortality is immanent. But is there really any immaterial Spirit that may be said to sovereignly determine all the component factors of our phenomenal existence? Taking for granted the existence of the Spirit, are we justified in ascribing to it or to the Individual Self an eternity of existence or a non-temporal form of being? Questions of this nature are much embarrassing to the analytical reason, but still they continually proceed from the human heart in as much as the entire scheme of our life hangs upon our attitude to them. It will be interesting to pass in review the various modes of reaction of human thought to the suggestion of an immortal spirit.

OBJECTIONS TO THE DOCTRINE OF IMMORTALITY

Schools of thought dominated by the physical mind look askance at the idea of immortality. Even a spirit of definite opposition to the idea is to be noticed in those who worship at the altar of the senses. They are obsessed by a sort of psycho-phobia. All that is mental, psychical or spiritual is to them anathema. Materialism suggests that the mind is not an independent variable, it has no causal efficacy of its own. The mind is just a

function of the brain. It is an epiphenomenon or an accidental by-product of the ganglionic centres of the brain. Such being the case, the question of immortality of the human spirit does not arise at all. That which is existentially dependent upon the brain can hardly survive the cessation of cerebral functioning. Even those who concede to the mind a better status than that of an epiphenomenon and look upon it as a novel and emergent quality superior to physical and chemical characteristics cannot countenance the idea of survival. As an emergent quality, the mind may not be a product of cerebral movements, but still, as conceived by the upholders of the doctrine of emergent evolution, it is an emergent quality and not an emergent substance. When certain empirical conditions are fulfilled, the quality of mentality emerges into being as a determination of a specific constellation of vital functions. Even though the specifically mental characteristics cannot be derived from the properties of the nervous apparatus, still the mind is affirmed to be existentially dependent upon the nervous apparatus. So the destruction of the nervous system is bound to involve as a consequence the cessation of all mental activity.

One major objection to the belief in immortality is then this that the mind has no independent status but is only a function of the brain. William James in his Ingersoll lecture on Human Immortality has thoroughly discussed this objection. The objection seems to carry special weight because it is raised by men of science, and the name of science exercises these days almost a magical influence upon the credulity of people. But when science is understood as a purely empirical study and as a positive body of knowledge from which all trans-empirical notions are to be expunged, the meaning of the word 'function' must be restricted to mere concomitant variation. Causality in the sense of productive efficiency is a trans-empirical notion which is imported from a non-scientific source. By the expression "the mind is a function of the brain" we are then to understand simply that there is a relation of concomitant variation or correlation between the mind and the body, or that there is a sort of correspondence between mental and cerebral processes. This knocks the bottom out of the materialistic objection by emancipating the mind from causal and existential dependence upon the cerebral structure.

Let us, however, admit causality as an objectively valid category. Dr. Whitehead, than whom there is perhaps no other philosopher who understands the spirit of modern science better, goes to the length of affirming causality as a datum of our perception, the type of perception which he calls "perception in the mode of causal efficacy" as distinguished from

“percepttion in the mode of presentational immediacy.”¹ Admitting the objective validity of causality, it can be pointed out that the word “function” may mean two entirely different things: it may mean productive function, and it may also mean releasing, permissive or transmissive function. When we say “light is a function of the electric circuit” we have an instance of productive function. But in the world of physical nature we have cases of releasing or permissive function and transmissive function in addition to those of productive function. The mind is a function of the brain not perhaps in the sense that the brain produces the mind but rather in the sense that the brain allows the light of consciousness to pour in from behind. William James says, “It is possible that the brains are thin and half-transparent places in the veil—coloured lenses in the wall of nature admitting light from the super-solar source, but at the same time tingeing and restricting it...In that case the genuine matter of reality, the life of souls as it is in its fullness will break through our several brains into this world in all sorts of restricted forms, and with all the imperfections and queernesses that characterise our finite individualities here below.”² According to James, the transmission theory not only fits in quite well with the alleged facts in favour of materialism, but also enjoys some positive superiorities over the production theory. While the production theory, which amounts to a belief in the generation of consciousness *de novo* in a vast number of places, has to admit innumerable miracles, the transmission theory avoids this necessity for miracle-mongering. Secondly, the transmission theory is quite in keeping with the doctrine of the “threshold of consciousness.” The rising and lowering of a psycho-physical threshold exactly conforms to the conception of the brain as an obstructive medium of transmission, whose obstruction may grow alternately greater or less. Furthermore, the transmission theory puts itself in touch with a whole class of experiences such as religious conversion, providential leadings in answer to prayers, instantaneous healings, premonitions, apparitions at the time of death, clairvoyant visions or impressions and the like. All such experiences, quite paradoxical and meaningless on the production theory, fall very naturally into place on the transmission theory. One need only suppose the continuity of our consciousness with a mother sea of consciousness, to allow for exceptional waves occasionally pouring over the dam. Understood in this sense, there is no reason why the mortality of the brain should not be compatible with the immortality of the conscious spirit.

¹ “Whitehead’s Process and Reality”, pp. 169-70

² “Human Immortality”, by William James, p. 35

The doctrine of the mind as a novel emergence is even less incompatible with the durational superiority of the mind. It is maintained that the mind appears on the scene of empirical reality or manifests itself when the vital functions are suitably developed and organised. All that logically follows from this is that the brain is a condition not of the existence of the mind but of its manifestation. So the destruction of the body can mean only the disappearance of the mind from a particular sphere, or the cessation of the mind's self-manifestation in a particular fashion.

The most shattering blow to the prospects of human survival does however come from the modern Pan-objectivist school of thinkers who call themselves Neo-Realists. The psycho-phobia of these ultra-moderns has led them to regard the mind as a mere function of the objective world. Mind or consciousness does not exist inside the cortical centres of the brain,—it does not exist there, whether as an epiphenomenon or as an emergent quality, let alone its status as an independent variable,—it exists rather out there in the objective world. Consciousness is just a group of objects arranged in a specific way. It is a cross-section of the stream of objective events specifically responded to by the highly developed nervous system which is generally believed to carry consciousness. As selected by the nervous system, a portion of objective reality gets illumined; it is this selected and illumined character of a group of objects which constitutes the essence of all that is mental or spiritual. The mind thus being reduced to a passing feature of the groupings and re-groupings of objective occurrences, all talk of survival or immortality becomes meaningless jargon. But a little reflection will show that the Pan-objectivist attempt at resolving consciousness into a specific configuration of objects is a flight in the face of obvious facts in the interest of a fanciful theory. The irreducible duality of subject and object inherent in the cognitive situation is too obvious a fact to be ignored. The attempt to reduce the subject to a mere function of the object is as ridiculous as to exhibit the object as a mere mode of the subject. Subject and object, irreducible one to the other, can at best be shown to be aspects of a wider and inclusive whole which can be designated neither as subject nor as object. When A is said to be conscious of B, the little preposition 'of' stands for an essential difference. The organism has indeed the power of getting specially related to different objects from time to time. But this relation cannot give rise to the consciousness of any object until some other most essential condition is fulfilled. One can go on looking at an object for a long period but yet may not see it. The organism's relation to an object by way of adjustment or response has been supposed to con-

stitute the essence of consciousness, because it has been miscalled "selection" which is a particularly conscious activity. In the case of an object specifically responded to by the nervous system, it must be noted that the object, the responsive activity of the nervous system, and the relation obtaining between the object and the nervous system, can all be made into objects of consciousness. From this it is crystal clear that consciousness as such can be identified neither with the object as specifically related to the organism, nor with the "selecting" activity of the organism, nor with the relation between them. If the selecting activity of the organism or the nervous system be non-conscious, it cannot produce consciousness anywhere whether inside or outside the brain; a dark and blind process can impart no illumination to any object or configuration of objects. If the selecting activity be admitted to be conscious, as it really is, that must be due to the presence of some unique factor, a psychical principle, which exercises a controlling and co-ordinating function in regard to the nervous apparatus. This makes it abundantly clear that the iconoclastic resolve to level down all that is psychical or spiritual to the dust of matter is a senseless and misguided endeavour. Faith in immortality, whatever other objections it may have to face, is thus saved from the gallows of Pan-objectivism!

THE DOCTRINE OF RACIAL IMMORTALITY

The theory of immortality has often been construed or misconstrued in a way which is outrageous to the fundamental trend of our moral and spiritual experiences. The suggestion has been made that immortality really belongs not to the individual members of a class but to the class or the species itself. That which survives the death of individual human beings is not any disembodied individual spirit,—because no such spirit can be brought within the range of sensuous observation,—but the human race considered as a whole. Men may come and men may go, but the human species remains for ever! So, by immortality we are to mean racial immortality and not after-death persistence of the individual. But even if the matter is to be judged by mere appearance, we will find that the verdict of natural science is unfavourable to the doctrine of racial immortality. Physics would point out that the human race can be said to enjoy only a sort of relative permanence as compared with its short-lived individual members. The life-giving energy of the sun is so fast getting dissipated that conditions will at a future date be found unfavourable for the maintenance of life on this our speck of stellar dust. Moreover, there is no

knowing that our mother Earth will not one day be dashed to pieces through encounter with a mightier celestial body, thus putting an end to the uncertain flickering of life as a tiny glow. But all this is how things look from an external standpoint. The case for human immortality rests upon deeper spiritual experiences, experiences that reveal him not only as a lump of flesh and blood, an infinitesimal proton of a bewilderingly vast physical system, but essentially as a child of the ineffable Infinite. Racial permanence can by no means be said to constitute the true meaning or exhaust the whole meaning of the theory of human immortality. When we talk of human immortality, we first and foremost mean the durational continuation or the non-temporal existence of the individual, the denial of which amounts to a rejection of the doctrine of immortality in its most fundamental sense. Those who take racial permanence to be the one meaning of the theory of human immortality are not aware that the individual is not a mere means to the ends of the race, but has intrinsic worth and a distinctive goal of his own. The race is as much a means to the development of the individual, as the individual is a means to the progress of the race. The individual is both means and end, and that is because, in his deepest essence, he is indetical with the soul of the race or with the Cosmic Self, and still more.

IMMORTALITY IN THE SENSE OF ETERNITY OF FORMS AND VALUES

Another view of immortality makes it an intrinsic property of Forms and Values only. If mortality reigns supreme in the flux of sensible existence, the true home of immortality is the supersensuous realm of non-temporal Forms. There is, to all appearances, a yawning chasm between the world of changing events and the world of unchangeable Forms, between the realm of the mortal and the home of the immortal. Yet there is found to be a mysterious penetration of the sensible by the supersensuous, an "ingression" of the immortal values into the transient particulars of matter or into the actual events or occasions of experience. Men can be instrumental to such ingression or to the material embodiment of eternal Forms. When a man discovers some important and new aspect of Truth and expresses it in language, he helps the process of ingression of the supersensuous into the sensuous; when a man catches a glimpse of Beauty and gives it an embodiment in the stuff of matter, he performs only the function of a mediating agent; when a man gets inspired by a vision of the Holy and strives hard to live up to that vision and to express it in his own life or in the life of the society through radical reforms and

changes, he is also concerned with a process of immortalising the mortal. The achievements of a man are worthy and valuable in so far as they represent the manifestation of something of the higher values in the sensuous medium.

When a great man dies, we say that his name is immortalised in his achievements or in the hearts of people who live to appreciate his achievements. A man's noble achievements are abiding testimony to his dynamic vision of eternal Forms. The achievements are immortal in so far as they reflect something of the true immortal, i. e., timeless Forms. A great man gets immortalised by virtue of such achievements. Now, in the opinion of some thinkers, this exhausts the whole meaning of human immortality. When death draws a curtain over the life-drama of a man, all that remains is what he leaves behind as a legacy to his posterity—his words and his deeds. The extent to which these words and deeds are an expression of the higher values and a source of good to the society, provides a measure of his greatness and his memorability.* A man continues to live wherever his influence is felt and his name kindles inspiration. But this is after all a poetic manner of speech, and a distorted meaning of the expression "immortality of the soul". When it is said that a man continues to live in his legacy to posterity, all that is meant is that the posterity continues to remember him with respect and gratitude for what he did for them. This does not amount to durational continuation of a man's *existence*, or his attainment of any exalted non-temporal mode of *being*. Countrymen's loving homage to the hallowed memory of their departed hero is not the same thing as the latter's continued existence as a living source of dynamic efforts. There is indisputably a good sense in which a great man, after he passes away, can be said to be immortalised in the minds of his countrymen. But that only signifies the worth of his contribution to the society, and the country's grateful acknowledgment of that worth. There is no warrant here for any further conclusion as to the continued ontological status of the departed great. Whatever poetic justification there may be for identifying a man with the fruit of his creative endeavours—for identifying the cause with the effect—a man after all transcends all his creations, and has independent roots in the structure of reality as a unique whole of content. So, the philosophically important sense of human immortality is the death-defying character of the human Person as a source of multi-form creations. The eternity of Forms and Values, and the persistence of valuable achievements, must therefore be carefully distinguished from the immortality of the human soul.

IMMORTALITY AS AN EXCLUSIVE CHARACTERISTIC OF BRAHMAN

The Sankarite school of thought considers immortality as an intrinsic characteristic of Brahman and Brahman alone. Brahman is immortal in so far as It absolutely transcends the time-process. Or, to be more accurate, Brahman is the pure undivided consciousness for which the march of time is a mere illusion so that even the notion of transcendence has no proper application here. Brahman transcends time and yet transcends it not; It knows no birth and no death, no growth and no decay; It is pure existence, the essence of which we try to express imperfectly by the concept of immortality. Men are immortal in so far as that which is real in them is Brahman. The Sankarite school does not admit any the least difference between the individual soul and the supreme soul, between Jivatman and Paramatman. Individuality is only a product of Ignorance, and as such it can by no means be regarded as a persistent factor in the structure of Reality. A man is immortal in the sense that his individualised existence is a false superimposition of Brahman who is eternal. Spiritual illumination would make him realise that his embodied being is an illusory appearance, and that his I-ness or egoity is a deceptive reflection of Ignorance of the one Supreme Self that appears as Many. That which survives the death of the gross physical body is the subtle body (*sukshma deha*) which takes rebirth innumerable times until on the attainment of spiritual illumination a man realises his essential non-difference from the one supreme Self or Brahman. Now, the individual is immortal on this view, not in the plain straight-forward sense of the term immortal, but in a pick-wickian sense. An individual man is immortal not as an individual, not as a unique form of manifestation or a particular centre of action of the Supreme, but in the sense that he is a false super-imposition on the Immortal. He is supposed to be immortal only in so far as the transcendent and supra-individual Reality behind him is immortal.

But the issue of human immortality primarily involves the question whether individuality can be treated as a permanent factor in the ultimate constitution of reality. Does the individual Self survive not only the death of the physical body but also the all-consuming fire of spiritual illumination? Individuality as a product of Ignorance cannot, according to the Sankarite school, survive the fire of spiritual illumination, so that immortality can strictly belong only to the one supra-individual Spirit. The doctrine of human immortality is, then, as interpreted by the Sankara-Vedanta, just a re-affirmation of the eternity of Brahman. This is due to a failure to see that real Individuality is different from Egoity or from the

separative individualisation of the lower Prakriti. That which melts away under the fire of spiritual illumination is Egoity, and not the real Individuality. The fundamental tenet of Integral Idealism is this, that Individuality is no less real than Universality and Transcendence. The Individual Self which is made of the stuff of knowledge survives death, survives the highest spiritual illumination, and ever continues to function as an integral aspect and a genuine form of manifestation of the ineffable Supreme.

THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL OF IMMORTALITY

The immortality of man, we come now to conclude, does not simply signify the eternity of Brahman that appears as man, but the perpetuation of man as an individual differentiation of Brahman. But has every man the latent capacity for attaining immortality, or are we to distinguish between man and man? And what about non-human living beings, about the lower species of animals? The evolutionary perspective has enormously increased our scale of spaces, times and numbers. The history of the human race on earth is the history of a prolonged process of evolutionary progression in the course of countless ages. The vast multitudes of people belonging to one generation strive hard and silently pass away to make room for an increased number of people in the next generation. But even the human race does not form a closed circle. The barrier between man and animal has been pulled down. The dividing lines between the different species of animals have almost been washed away by the flood of scientific investigation. The history of life on earth has been exhibited as the history of innumerable varieties of beings representing different stages in the self-fulfilment of the vital urge. Such being the case, one can no longer confine immortality only to members of the human species. There was a time when immortality was attributed only to heroes among mankind. This is the aristocratic conception of immortality. But the view that immortality is immanent in the very nature of the individual soul replaces the aristocratic conception by the democratic conception of immortality. Every individual human is a child of immortality, increasingly growing into it in the course of his evolution. The evolutionary perspective of modern thought must bring about a further extension of this democratic ideal. What is true of an individual human must also be true of every living creature. As mess-mates at life's banquet, animals also have an equal right to perpetuation and to continued existence under increasingly favourable circumstances for progressive self-development. The soul or the

psychic present in every creature is destined to advance along the ascending scale of increasingly higher grades of evolution through cycles of birth and re-birth until the full glory of individuality is attained. The ancient Seers of India were aware of this great truth, even though they might have no idea of the modern theory of evolution in all its varied implications.

We find ourselves confronted with a certain objection here. If every living creature has the potentiality of immortality, then there would be generated the problem of eternal preservation of endless individuals. It would mean that all the bewildering numbers of living beings who have ever chanced to see the light of day, will have to be preserved in the heart of reality. The critic would at once exclaim, "Oh, the suggestion is simply staggering! The very heavens themselves, and the cosmic times and spaces, would stand aghast at the notion of preserving eternally such an ever-swelling plethora and glut of it!" But this objection rests, as William James rightly observes, upon the projection of our human incapacity into the heart of reality, and upon an attempt to determine the nature of things by our narrow scale of values. In the heart of infinite being itself there can be no such thing as plethora, glut or supersaturation. God's sympathy is boundless, and His scale of values is infinite. Integral Idealism envisages God as indivisibly present in every creature, and believes Him to preside over the finite being's process of self-perfection with infinite patience and through infinite time. A creature's attainment of self-perfection through evolutionary growth would mean the realisation of essential identity with God Himself and that is the essence of immortality. So, there is no need for eternal damnation or total annihilation in regard to any finite creature. There can be no lack of accommodation in the kingdom of the Infinite, nor can there be any saturation-point of interest or love in the case of the Supreme Lover.

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT OF IMMORTALITY

It is no use dwelling any more upon the objections to the theory of immortality. Some of the most fatal objections have been examined in the foregoing pages. It will now be instructive to turn to a brief consideration of some of the positive arguments advanced in support of the theory. Such arguments can be considered under three principal heads, namely, metaphysical, ethical and psychological arguments.

* "Human Immortality", by William James, p. 71

METAPHYSICAL ARGUMENTS

The metaphysical argument essentially consists in showing that the immortality of the soul is a logical consequence of the very nature of the soul. All philosophers have some definite views about the nature of the Self and its precise status in the structure of reality. If the characteristic of immortality can be shown to be immanent in, or capable of logical deduction from, some such views about the essential nature of the Self, then the argument employed would be metaphysical. There is a tendency among modern writers to reject off-hand metaphysical arguments as unworthy of serious consideration, because they hold that a proposition containing a metaphysical entity is not even false but simply meaningless.* Opposition to the metaphysical or the met-empirical has indeed become the fashion of modern times. A statement of fact is said to be significant only if it can be verified in the context of sense-experience, or, if there be some possible sense-experience relevant to the determination of its truth or falsehood. All reference to the supersensuous is sheer non-sense. But we should like to point out that the contemporary drift towards extreme empiricism and logical positivism betrays an excessive pre-occupation with the superficies of experience, and a resulting blindness to the heights and depths of experience. Granting that verifiability—whether practical verifiability or verifiability in principle—is the one rule of literal significance, there is no warrant for limiting experience to sense-revelation only. If experience means immediate contact with reality, sense-perception, far from being the only type of experience, is an enormously complicated process of touching only the outermost fringe of the unfathomable Real. Moral and religious experiences, mystical and spiritual experiences, have at least an equal claim to objective validity as sense-experience. Hundreds of front-rank thinkers and masters of illumined life would testify to the fact that there is an immediate disclosure of the nature of the Self in the depth of spiritual experience. The school of philosophy, therefore, which sets itself in violent opposition to all talk about the Self conceived as a permanent spiritual reality and brands it as clotted nonsense, must be, to say the least, extremely superficial. True, while sense-experience is common and universal, spiritual experience seems to be the monopoly of a privileged few. But be it noted that the privileged few have acquired their privilege by the strenuous efforts of their life, which means that it requires a necessary course of training and the attainment of a higher level of consciousness to obtain an

*"Language, Truth and Logic", by A. J. Ayer, Chap. 1

access to the hidden treasures of knowledge. The alleged privilege is one which is accessible to all who strive for it; it is a privilege which is also a latent birthright of all humans.

One metaphysical argument in support of the doctrine of immortality is that the soul is an absolutely simple and indivisible reality. What imparts to a thing its liability to destruction is its complexity of structure. Destruction or annihilation is indeed another name for the dissociation of a thing's component factors. A table breaks up when its parts are separated from each other and from the whole. An animal dies when there is a disintegration of the physical, chemical and vital elements of which it is composed. But the soul as a spiritual reality is affirmed to be a structureless entity. It is the principle of unity behind the successive plurality of psychological states and processes. Thinking, feeling, willing, etc. are not parts or constituent factors of the soul, but divergent modes of its activity. Absolutely indivisible in its intrinsic nature, it is not in any way subject to the disintegrating influence of any external agency.

The above argument is exposed to some grave objections. First, is there any *a priori* reason for the fact that whatever is simple structureless must be imperishable? Possession of parts may make a thing liable to destruction, but does it follow from this that non-possession of parts must make a thing immortal? Some Buddhist thinkers conceive of the fundamental components of the world as absolutely simple and *sui generis* reals (*swalakṣaṇa*). But still these simple and indivisible components are supposed by them to be momentary or instantaneous (*kṣanika*). Secondly, taking for granted that simplicity of being entails endless persistence in time, the conception of the soul as a simple and indivisible spiritual substance has been seriously challenged. Do not the multitudinous psychological states and processes go to bestow a complexity of structure upon the soul? Even if they be not parts of the soul they must at least be admitted to be genuine forms of manifestation of the soul. That makes the soul a complex and manifold reality, and not a featureless principle of identity disconnected with the psychic plurality. Thus the notion of the soul's absolute simplicity is exploded. Even though the doctrine of immortality be true, it cannot be affirmed on the ground of the simplicity of the soul. If the mental phenomena be regarded as divergent modes of activity of the soul they must be traceable to and rooted in significant differences within the nature of the soul.

The Sankhya school of Indian philosophy holds that it is confused identification with Prakṛiti or material Nature which eclipses the absolute simplicity of the spiritual entity. The Soul or Puruṣa is pure unobjective consciousness. Subject-object structure is a characteristic of the empirical

self and not of the transcendent Purusha. The plurality of psychical phenomena does indeed require a unifying principle, and that unifying principle is the Ego. It is the Ego which functions as the central organising principle of the empirical self, and is proclaimed by Hegelians as a unique principle of unity-in-difference. But this Ego is only a reflection in Prakriti of the true transcendent Spirit. It is as much a modification, even though a superior modification, of Prakriti, as the psychological plurality which it unifies and organises. The transcendent Spirit which is ontologically separate from Prakriti is beyond all difference and above all change. The threefold distinction of knower, knowledge and known falls within the empirical self and is simply inapplicable to the pure consciousness of the Purusha. Thus the indivisibility of the self is vindicated and with it its immortality. But how does Prakriti or material Nature stand related to the Pure Spirit or Purusha? Prakriti must first be known and related to some consciousness before it can be affirmed as a metaphysical principle. If the consciousness which affirms its existence be false and illusory, then Prakriti ceases to be a true metaphysical principle. If the consciousness which affirms it be true, then Prakriti must be related as an object to the Purusha which alone is the seat of all true knowledge. So the consciousness of the Purusha cannot be entirely unobjective; it betrays rather a subject-object structure. Moreover the very existence of Prakriti as a separate principle is bound to invade the nature of the Purusha and destroy its simplicity by the fact of relatedness, because relations never fall entirely outside the terms related. So, the Sankara Vedanta goes one step beyond the Sankhya standpoint and seeks to maintain the absolute purity and simplicity of the Spirit, the Atman, the transcendent Self by treating the empirical self as a false superimposition upon it. In this view, the Prakriti of the Sankhya is replaced by the real-unreal principle of Maya which projects a false plurality upon the locus of pure unity. The Self is conceived as one undivided and indivisible consciousness, which knows no difference, whether internal or external.

But the Sankarite view, as we have seen, makes immortality a property of the Absolute alone and not of the individual Selves conceived as differentiations of the Absolute. Integral Idealism, however, looks upon the Individual Self, as we have repeatedly observed, as a real poise of being of the Absolute. The ultimate principle of differentiation, the Divine Shakti, is, in this view, neither an illusory principle nor an absolutely different and alien stuff, but rather the dynamic nature of the Supreme Spirit. She is the fundamental creative urge, the sovereign power of knowledge. So the Individual Self who is the offspring of her creative activity and who is consequently made of the stuff of knowledge, must be an heir to the immortality

of the Supreme Spirit. The Divine Shakti is a real principle of differentiation, because the Absolute, of which she is the dynamic nature, is a manifold unity, and not a blank featureless unity. Absolutely one and indivisible, the Absolute is yet capable of assuming innumerable forms. The Individual Self who freely participates in the nature of the Absolute must therefore be a manifold unity too. The manifoldness which constitutes the wealth of content of the unitary Self does not, however, denote any multitude of separable parts. So, the Self, even though a manifold unity, cannot be said to have any complexity of structure; it is pure and simple in the sense of being absolutely indivisible and undivided in character. The Self is indeed partless and structureless, albeit it has the capacity for evolving a diversity of elements and functions. Manifoldness is contained as a possibility in the nature of the Self which is essentially unitary. It is this unitariness and indivisibility of the Self and the fact of its being a poise of being of the Absolute which makes it immortal.

The empirical self is not, according to Integral Idealism, an illusory appearance or a modification of some absolutely alien stuff. The successive plurality of mental states and functions are connected with the power of objective self-manifestation inherent in the transcendent unitary Self. The psychological multiplicities as we experience them at present are indeed, as the Sankhya holds, modifications of Prakriti. But Prakriti is not an absolutely alien principle; she is just the dynamic nature of the Spirit. The lower Nature which is productive of our present empirical self is an outward expression of the higher Nature which is the superconscient power of the Spirit. When thoroughly transformed by the Light and power of the Supernature, the empirical self with its diversified content would turn into a perfect image, a transparent self-expression, of the transcendent Self. This implies that even the empirical self is capable of being lifted into the sphere of immortality. A thoroughly transformed and integrated empirical self would cease to be a complex of factors liable to dissociation. Turned into a perfect image of the transcendent Self it would acquire the immortality of the latter by virtue of being soaked in the dominant and all-determining sense of the oneness of all being.

THEORY OF CONDITIONAL IMMORTALITY

Another metaphysical argument derives the individual's immortality from the intrinsic goodness of God. Pringle Pattison develops this argument with much persuasiveness in his *Idea of God*. The world is affirmed by him to be essentially a vale of soul-making. Its typical business is to develop through

the strife and struggle of life individual selves as the focalised expressions of the universe. Now it would be repugnant to our faith in God and absolutely contrary to His goodness to suggest that individual selves having been developed through a protracted and strenuous process of evolution can be wantonly set aside and allowed to perish. Pringle Pattison maintains that the goodness of God is the unfailing guarantee of the persistence of the soul which is growing more and more into an image of the Divine. Immortality is not in his opinion the birth-right of every individual. It is rather to be earned and preserved by sustained and strenuous efforts. The individual can acquire immortality only on the attainment of the moral level of existence and only by virtue of his continued efforts to live in harmony with the moral order. He is thus in agreement with Lotze stating that the persistence of the individual is conditional upon the fulfilment of his moral mission! This has been called the theory of conditional immortality. Both Lotze and Pringle Pattison hold that every created thing will continue if and so long as its continuance belongs to the meaning of the world.*

Now the argument from the goodness of God is not as cogent as the argument from the essential nature of the individual Self. If the individual Self is a non-temporal differentiation of the Absolute then there is no need to invoke the goodness of God to argue its immortality. If, on the contrary, the individual Self in its essential nature be believed to be the product of a temporal process then even the goodness of God will be of no avail in preventing its annihilation in time although the final annihilation may come a bit later than the break-up of the body. Having produced something worthy and valuable it is not binding upon God that He should have to eternally preserve it in its distinctive form. The goodness of God may well be manifested in the production of ever better, worthier and newer entities. We cannot summarily dismiss the suggestion which has been made by a great philosopher that directly a value is realised God ceases to take further interest in it and turns His attention to the actualisation of other unique values. God with His envisagement of infinite possibilities can hardly be tied down to what is already achieved or confer upon it an interminable lease of life. All actual achievements may, however, be said to acquire what Whitehead calls "objective immortality of the past"; having lapsed into the past they will ever continue to be ideally and causally present in everything that comes afterwards. But in this sense, all events however momentary and ephemeral, do enjoy objective immortality. If the individual Self is to be distinguished from passing events as enjoying timeless existence the ground of that dis-

* See Pringle Pattison's paper in the Symposium, proceedings of Aristotelian Society, 1918

tion must be sought in the very nature of the Self. The Self is the pure subject which transcends the objective march of events; as a principle of self-consciousness it is essentially non-temporal and looks upon time as a moving image of its will-to-objective-self-expression. Such being the case immortality cannot be said to be dependent upon the fulfilment of any conditions, but is rather an intrinsic characteristic of the Self itself. If it be insisted that the Self can continue to exist only so long as it actually puts forth the energies of its moral nature and fulfils the moral mission of life, then it is really not immortality but conditional persistence that may be said to belong to it. Conditional immortality is indeed a contradiction in terms.

There is another metaphysical argument which fastens upon the essence of God as Love and considers it as the final guarantee of the continued existence of the individual. Every individual is what he is by virtue of being an object of divine love. He answers to a definite purpose of God and God has an exclusive interest in him. God's love it is which functions as the supreme principle of individuation, confers upon every individual his unique character, and thus ensures his continued existence in the scheme of reality. The dogma of love is: "There shalt be no other". Since then love knows no substitute, individuality which is sustained by divine love can have no fear of dissolution or total annihilation. As a unique fulfilment of divine purpose the life of every individual must in its transcendent essence be interminable. The argument may briefly be summed up as follows:

Whatever is an object of God's love or exclusive interest is imperishable,
Every individual is an object of God's love,
Therefore, every individual must be imperishable.

A little reflection will however show that the above argument is substantially the same as the argument from the essential nature of the Individual Self. To say that individuation is the fruit of Divine Love or Will or Purpose understood in Royce's acceptance of the terms, is another mode of expression for the view that individuality is a component factor of ultimate reality. The immortality of the Individual is bound up with the fact that he is a unique differentiation of the Absolute and the source of his uniqueness is traced by Royce to the Absolute's exclusive interest in him.

ETHICAL ARGUMENTS

Let us now turn to a brief consideration of some ethical arguments in support of the immortality of the soul. There is, first, the argument which

rests upon an examination of the nature of the moral ideal. Dr. Martineau has called it "Vaticinations of the Conscience". The moral ideal beacons us on to higher and higher levels of moral excellence. Even the most exalted moral heroes amongst us feel themselves falling far short of the ever-receding moral ideal. It is, therefore, simply impossible that such an infinite ideal can be fulfilled within the limits of a single life. The essential requirement of our ethical consciousness is that our present life should be prolonged into other spheres of being that can provide us with ample opportunities for an asymptotic approximation to the goal of ethical perfection. Our present life is oftener than not an unfinished moral adventure, a course of strenuous self-preparation cut short by the icy-cold hand of death. Those who have faith in the reality of the moral ideal cannot accept death as the final end of the moral endeavour.

But the question is forced into our mind: How far is the moral ideal valid? Is it ultimately real? As an ever receding goal, the moral ideal seems to exemplify what Hegel calls a bad infinite. It renders the notion of moral progress devoid of all meaning. If the goal can never be reached at all, all apparent approximation to it must be in the nature of an illusion. This is not, of course, to suggest that moral experience is altogether unreal or that the moral ideal is mere self-painting of the yearning spirit. What follows from the above criticism is that the moral ideal is a self-contradictory expression and as such cannot be ultimately valid. Integral Idealism holds that the moral ideal is an expression at the mental level of the spiritual goal of dynamic self-realisation. The goal of spiritual self-realisation can, we are sure, be attained here and now in this very life. Moreover, even the highest spiritual illumination is perfectly compatible with a career of ceaseless activity. It is quite arguable that those who have not realised their spiritual mission in this life must have ampler opportunities of self-unfoldment in the hereafter. But what about those who have realised the supreme goal here and now in this very life? They will indeed require no hereafter for the sake of opportunities for self-realisation. But having integrally realised the Spirit, they will awaken to the supreme task of expressing the Eternal in terms of Time. The apparently endless process of increasing approximation to the Infinite will yield place to the really infinite process of progressive self-manifestation in the sphere of the temporal. The liberated soul, having realised the timeless perfection of the Spirit, may continue to live as long as necessary and may even freely choose to take rebirth after death in order to push forward the Spirit's purpose of objective self-manifestation. It will be noticed that the above observations do not amount to a repudiation of the basic soundness of the ethical argument. They amount just to a little modification of

the fundamental purport of moral argument in regard to the precise nature of the supreme goal of life. This modification links up the ethical argument with our principal metaphysical argument.

Another ethical argument is what Dr. Martineau has called "Vaticinations in Suspense". Immanuel Kant gave it an authoritative formulation, and was led to regard the immortality of the soul as a postulate of the practical reason. The argument may be briefly stated as follows. The validity of moral experience which can hardly be called in question entails that reality can not be indifferent, far less hostile, to our ethical distinctions such as virtue and vice, right and wrong, good and bad, etc. Reality's regard for our ethical distinctions must be expressed in the shape of an equitable distribution of happiness and misery among people according to their moral deserts. The virtuous must be rewarded with happiness even if they may not themselves be disposed to run after it, and the vicious must be punished with misery even though they may try their utmost to avoid it. But the actual state of affairs in our present life is almost the exact opposite of this great desideratum. It betrays a wide disproportion between virtue and happiness. It is found oftener than not that the virtuous have to undergo untold sufferings and miseries, whereas the vicious ones merrily prosper and are provided with opportunities of drinking life to the lees. Kant, therefore, holds that the observed ways of our present life cannot represent the final verdict of reality upon human conduct. Our present life in the world must be prolonged into other spheres of existence where the final verdict of reality is pronounced, and the union of virtue and happiness as well as that of vice and misery, is brought about. The soul's immortality appears thus to be a necessary implication of the objective validity of ethical distinctions.

A slight reflection will, however, show that the argument under consideration rests upon crude notions about reward and punishment. Virtue is emphatically its own reward. Material comforts fade into insignificance before the delight of enlarged and expanded consciousness that genuine virtue produces. Self-sacrifice involved in virtue leads on to a deeper self-realisation. The painful struggle that attends the path of virtue leads to the peace of internal harmony and to the grandeur of perfect self-control. A vicious man, on the contrary, may really be unhappy amid all the glamour of his luxury. Vice which is another name for exclusive pre-occupation with the ego, is sure to produce the discomfort and disquiet of a contracted and strangled consciousness. Moreover, it must not be forgotten that there are lines of energy other than the ethical. What one receives from Nature in the shape of happiness and misery is appropriate to the kind of energy one puts forth. Sharpness of intelligence, keenness of insight into the nature

of men and things, realistic grasp of the trend of events, technical skill, etc. must have their own rewards, just as moral goodness may claim to have its own. A morally good person who betrays a lack of the requisite qualities of worldly success can have no legitimate grievance if he has to pass his life in poverty. Therefore, the pious wish to see him furnished with the means of comfort and luxury in a compensatory scheme of post-existence is but a poor support of the doctrine of immortality.

In an article entitled "The Moral Argument for Immortality" in the *Holborn Review*, Prof. A.E. Taylor has put the essence of the ethical argument with admirable clearness. As explained by Dr. Broad,* Taylor's arguments may be briefly stated as follows. (a). We have a strong sense of duty which cannot be without an objective basis. We consider it highly desirable that our life should be regulated by the ethical principles such as are embodied, say, in the Christian code of ethics rather than by the Horacian scheme or by the maxim, 'Make hay while the sun shines'. Now, had death been the final end of our life, the tables would have been turned and the Horacian scheme would have been preferable by far to the Christian code of ethics. So, death cannot signify the final end of our life; it is just the closing of a chapter of our life. (b). Secondly, the world would have been extremely evil if life with all its noble and brilliant efforts were just a bubble in an indifferent ocean of matter. (c). Thirdly, the essential righteousness of the world is as axiomatic a principle as the rationality or intelligibility of Nature which the scientist accepts. It is inconsistent for a scientist to accept the one and reject the other.

Dr. Broad has tried to show that the moral arguments as formulated by Taylor have very little probative value. (a). With regard to Taylor's first argument, Broad remarks that just as there are in men selfish motives and cravings for fleeting pleasures, so there are also within him altruistic impulses and lofty sentiments in regard to the higher values of Truth, Beauty and Goodness. So the Horacean scheme or "the fleeting hour" plan of life is sure to appear ignoble and the Christian code of ethics infinitely preferable. Once the altruistic emotions and abstract sentiments get the upper hand the marked superiority of the pleasures attendant upon their exercise is realised. This is in no way conditional upon an awareness of the immortality of the soul. (b). With regard to Taylor's second argument, Broad remarks that even if the world be very evil, we cannot logically argue to that which is necessary to make it good. It may be an unpleasant truth for us to accept that the world is extremely evil. But all that legitimately follows from the

* Broad's "Mind and Its Place in Nature", pp.492-505

impermanence of life and spirit is not that the world is very evil, but simply that it is not very good. (c). With regard to Taylor's third moral argument, Broad points out that on the ground that the intelligibility of Nature is as much an article of faith as the righteousness of the world, it cannot be argued that the acceptance of the one commits one to the acceptance of the other too, and that there is any inconsistency in the scientist's non-acceptance of the ethical postulate. In the absence of rational grounds in favour of any, no logical objection can be raised to the attitude of a man who accepts the one and rejects the other. The only truth that emerges is that the ethical postulate is logically and practically in the same status as the scientific postulate, so that the scientist has no right to cast stones at the moralist who assumes the righteousness of the world and the immortality of the soul. Both the postulates can be treated as simply heuristic maxims—not metaphysical truths—which function as sources of inspiration in regard to our intellectual operations or our ethical pursuits. Dr. Broad himself regards the immortality of the soul as one of those "noble myths" which go to constitute the foundation of our social organisation and which should consequently be removed from the arena of public discussion. But to our mind the ultimate truth about the wide-spread belief in human immortality is to be obtained not by considering its usefulness in regard to social organisation but by close reflection upon, and immediate realisation of, the nature of the Self. It will then be found that the power and force of human immortality, its effectively inspiring character, its pragmatic value, all these really flow from its essential soundness and intrinsic validity.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

Before closing our discussion of the doctrine of immortality it would be well to have a glance at the psychological argument in favour of man's survival or immortality. The well-attested findings of the Society for Psychical Research seem to provide abundant empirical corroboration of the belief in man's survival after death. The Society has brought to our notice certain abnormal or rather supernormal psychical phenomena such as the entranced medium, multiple personality, cross-correspondences, etc. which refuse to be explained away on lines suggested by materialism. None but those who are innocent of any first-hand information about these phenomena can nonchalantly dismiss them or call in question their genuineness. But it is natural that there should be wide divergence of opinion in regard to the proper interpretation of the supernormal psychical phenomena.

We do not for a moment suggest that the theory of human survival can be inductively elicited from these empirical facts. Attempts have been made to explain these phenomena without recourse to the hypothesis of disembodied spirits and by means of telepathy among living beings, whether this telepathy occurs between the conscious parts or between the unconscious parts of their minds. Dr. Broad holds that the minimum assumption that is necessary for a satisfactory explanation of the data revealed by Psychological Research is not the survival of the dead person's mind, but only the persistence of a component factor of his mind. The mind is, in his opinion, as we had occasion to observe earlier, a compound of two factors, the bodily factor and the psychic factor. The psychic factor is more than material in so far as it is extremely subtle and non-sensuous, and less than mental in as much as it lacks the characteristic properties of the mind. The mind with its distinctive features and functions emerges into being on a suitable combination of the two factors. Death signifies the dissociation of these factors, the disintegration of the organism and the consequent cessation of all specifically mental functions. What survives death is, therefore, not the mind but the psychic factor which carries within it the traces and dispositions left by the life-long experiences of the dead person. The psychic factor is capable of persisting for some time after death in a disembodied condition and can also at times combine with the body of an entranced medium to give rise to a temporary mind or "mindkin". It is this combination which, in Broad's opinion, holds the key to all abnormal and supernormal phenomena revealed by psychical research.*

Now, the psychic factor as conceived by Dr. Broad is an absolutely hypothetical entity. We are left completely in the dark in regard to its origin, intrinsic nature and destiny. If the psychic factor does not owe its origination to any external agency or circumstance, then it must be beginningless and consequently endless too. Broad tells us nothing about its mode of existence prior to its function as a component of the mental. Moreover, Broad looks upon the psychic factor and the organic system as two cause-factors in the production of consciousness. But an unbiassed reflection upon the nature of consciousness is sure to establish that consciousness cannot be the product of any temporal process. It cannot emphatically be brought into being; it can only be made to appear. A dispassionate study of all psychical phenomena, normal, abnormal and supernormal, reveals the brain, as William James contends, not as a productive agency but as

*It looks as though Dr. Broad is referring here to what Sri Aurobindo calls the vital or psycho-vital sheath which persists after the bodily dissolution and carries over for some time the impressions of the life just left till it is dissolved in its turn. *The Editor.*

a releasing or transmissive medium. So, if anything persists or survives at all, it must be the principle of consciousness itself, and not something which combines with the brain in producing consciousness. If the persistent factor is something other than the mind, it must be a reality higher than the mind which is a stream of passing sensations and feelings and not anything lesser than the mind.

It is surely not possible to draw a full picture of the immortal reality in man entirely on the basis of the findings of the Society for Psychical Research. They can hardly be treated as conclusive evidence of the immortality of the soul. They just clear the ground of much sceptical fog and create a presumption in its favour. When one is convinced on surer grounds of the independent existence and immortal nature of the Individual Self, one will find in such phenomena a sort of empirical corroboration of one's conviction. The psychological argument is without doubt a good empirical approach to the problem of human immortality. But its chief value lies not in positively establishing the existence of the immortal spirit, but in disarming all opposition to it on empirical grounds.

MATERIAL IMMORTALITY

When people talk of human immortality, they generally refer to the immortality of the spirit in man, to the immortality of the individual Self. According to Integral Idealism, a man's Individual Self, which knows no birth and knows no death, is transcendent in character and presides from above over his protracted evolution through cycles of birth and rebirth. This timeless existence of the Individual Self has been described by us as spiritual immortality. We have further maintained that there is in the inmost centre of a man's embodied existence the soul or the psychic which is the highest representative of the Individual Self dynamically present in him. The soul evolves with the evolving individual and carries him through a long succession of births towards the final fruition of his life. This persistence of the psychic through the stream of evolution is what we have called psychic immortality. Now, the final goal of terrestrial evolution is, according to Integral Idealism, terrestrial or material immortality. It means the full incarnation of the Eternal in time, the complete manifestation of the Spirit in material conditions. It signifies a condition when all the parts of a man's embodied existence including the physical, the vital and the mental are turned into perfect images of the Spirit under the transforming touch of the Supermind. This is, however, after all an ideal

is a full elaboration of which calls for separate treatment. The ideal is not impossible, because the physical, the vital and the mental are, in our view, only lower modes of manifestation of the constitutive principles of the Supreme Spirit. The ideal is even necessary, because it alone can impart meaning and significance to the process of terrestrial evolution consistently with the timeless perfection of the Spirit, transcendent, universal and individual. But still people may always think themselves justified in laughing away the notion of material immortality. This deep-seated doubt can be removed, and final proof of the ideal can be provided, only when the evolution of Man into Superman through the next forward leap of evolutionary Nature will be an accomplished fact. The empirical proof of all ideals lies indeed in their effective realisation.

The Divine Maya

BY ARABINDA BASU

INTRODUCTION

MAYA is, along with Brahman, Karma and Moksha, perhaps the most famous concept of Indian Philosophy. It is as old as the Vedas and occupies a most important place in the Upanishads, the Gita, the different schools of the Vedanta and the Tantra. Maya is creative energy and according to its conception as identical with or detached from Reality, it is interpreted as conscious or unconscious and its creation the world taken as real or unreal. On a realistic or contrary conception of the world depends the view of life in the world as meaningful and purposeful or devoid of any significance and futile. Thus we see that Maya is deservedly the most important category in the spiritual philosophies which are not only statements about Reality but also guides to the Highest Good of life. Whether that Good is attainable here or only elsewhere, whether it is life's fulfilment or extinction, almost entirely depends on the view that is taken of Maya.

Sri Aurobindo, to an exposition of whose vision and philosophy this Annual is devoted, makes an extensive use of the concept of Maya which is one of the fundamentals of his system of the Integral Adwaita. In a sense it is the pivotal category of the philosophy we are studying, which has been called by its author 'a realistic Adwaita', an Adwaita which does not reject the world as illusion—as does the Mayavada of Shankara*—but

* It has been urged by some modern writers that Shankara did not regard the world as illusion and following these writers some critics of Sri Aurobindo have, rather uncritically, taken exception to his use of that word with reference to Shankara's philosophy of the world. But Sri Aurobindo is not the first thinker to call Shankara's Maya—and the Mayic world-illusion; it has always been understood as such and the idea that it is not so is a new-fangled one. Besides 'illusion' is an English word which does not occur in Shankara's writings. Whether or not the great Mayavadin regarded the world as illusion will depend on the meaning we attach to the word. If by illusion is meant a purely subjective experience, a projection of the ideas of an individual Knower, then certainly the world cannot be illusory according to Shankara who is one of the severest critics of subjectivism. If, on the other hand, we mean by illusion an objective but unreal experiential content, an appearance, a shadow independent of particular minds but without any substantiality or abiding truth of existence, then the world is illusion, for that precisely is Shankara's view of the creation. Even those writers who say that Shankara was not an illusionist,

accepts it as a real manifestation of Brahman in His own being. "The real Monism, the true Adwaita", says Sri Aurobindo, "is that which admits all things as the one Brahman and does not seek to bisect Its existence into two incompatible entities, an eternal Truth and an eternal Falsehood, Brahman and not-Brahman, Self and not-Self, a real Self and an unreal, yet perpetual Maya. If it be true that the Self alone exists, it must be also true that all is the Self."¹

Maya then is the real power of Brahman to manifest Himself as the world.² The phrase 'the real Power of Brahman' will, we suppose, sound strange to many, even most, students of Indian Philosophy. For the conception of Brahman as only static and silent devoid of any power or creative urge, a conception made widely popular by Shankara, is the most dominant and influential idea about Reality. But let us remember that there are other philosophical formulations in India and that the thought-currents represented by Kashmir Shaivism, the Tantra, the Gita and many other philosophies, the seed-ideas of which systems can be traced back to the Vedas and the Upanishads, conceive Reality not only as static Existence but also as dynamic Power. And Sri Aurobindo, following the true Vedic tradition, is completely at one with these systems in regarding Reality as Conscious Power.

Existence that is Consciousness, Consciousness that is Bliss, is the reality of the universe and ourselves; Sat-Chit-Ananda is the stuff, the ground, the continent and the goal, of the whole creative process and its creation—the world. And Chit is always interpreted as Chit-Shakti. "Chit is a power not only of knowledge," writes Sri Aurobindo, "but of expressive will, not only of receptive vision but of formative representation; the two are indeed one power. For Chit is an action of Being, not of the Void. What it sees, that becomes. It sees itself beyond Space and Time; that becomes in the conditions of Space and Time."³ And again, ".....the conscious-power, the Shakti that acts and creates.....is the Power of the Self; the duality then of Soul and World-Energy, silent Self and the crea-

nevertheless agree that the world is unreal according to him. But there is no valid reason why an objective unreal appearance cannot be called an illusion.

¹ The Life Divine, Vol. I. p.47. (1939 Edn.)

² It is not suggested, however, that Brahman *must* manifest. Brahman is perfect freedom, bound neither by the necessity nor by any incapacity to manifest. "It is so free that it is not even bound by its liberty. It can play at being bound without incurring a real bondage. Its chain is self-imposed convention."

³ Isha Upanishad (1941) p. 29. Compare : "Brahman the Reality is the self-existent Absolute and Maya is the Consciousness and Force of this self-existence," The Life Divine, Vol. II. p.78, 1939 Edn.

tive power of the Spirit, is not really something dual and separate, it is biune. As we cannot separate Fire and the power of Fire, it has been said, so we cannot separate the Divine Reality and its Consciousness-Force, Chit-Shakti. This first realisation of Self as something intensely silent and purely static is not the whole truth of it, there can also be a realisation of Self in its power, Self as the condition of world-activity and world-existence."¹

The Consciousness-Force by a process of self-concealing converts itself into different levels of energy down to the material. In the chapter called 'The Ascending Series of Substance' in the first volume of *The Life Divine*, Sri Aurobindo has shown that Reality is one identical Substance, Spirit and Matter being its two poles. Matter is only the extreme condensation of spiritual substance as a result of self-absorption on the part of Reality. Similarly material energy is Conscious-Force holding back its consciousness. The whole gamut of energy from the material to the spiritual is the active Brahman identical with the basic silence. Maya is Chit-Shakti applying itself to the task of manifesting definite results out of the infinite potentialities in the infinite Reality. It is the Power of Brahman or Brahman as Power regarding Himself as creatrix of the world.

The ideal of the Divine Life here in Matter, the characteristic, special note struck by Sri Aurobindo in metaphysical thought, has no chance of realisation if Maya, which is the fundamental constitutive principle of the world, is taken to be the power of Illusion, the world as an apparent existence and life in the world as a meaningless vanity, none of which has any abiding reality. Acceptance of the reality of the world and also of the divine significance of life in it is the minimum requirement of a faith in and practice of the great ideal that Sri Aurobindo has given us. Any other view can result only in a withdrawal from the world and escape from the life upon earth. "The affirmation of a divine life upon earth and an immortal sense in mortal existence, says Sri Aurobindo, "can have no base unless we recognise not only eternal Spirit as the inhabitant of this bodily mansion, the wearer of this mutable robe, but accept Matter of which it is made, as a fit and noble material out of which He weaves constantly His garbs, builds recurrently the unending series of His mansions."² We must in fact go further in our acceptance and regard Matter itself as Brahman. For, "nor is this, even, enough to guard us against a recoil from life in the body unless, with the Upanishads, perceiving behind their appearances the identity in essence of these two extreme terms of existence, we are able to say in the very language

¹ "The Life Divine," Vol. II, p. 79

² *ibid*, pp. 8-9

of those ancient writings, 'Matter also is Brahman,' and to give its full value to the vigorous figure by which the physical universe is described as the external body of the Divine Being."¹

But before we come to an exposition of Sri Aurobindo's own conception of Maya, it is better that we study his reasons for rejecting the Illusionist theory, because most readers are reminded of that classical theory whenever the word is mentioned. Prejudices die hard and metaphysical theories which through centuries have crystallised themselves in our philosophic mind and have almost become habits of our thought, are still more difficult to get rid of. For as Sri Aurobindo has beautifully put it, "We are bound in our Thought where we hold ourselves free".² We shall therefore first present a summary of Sri Aurobindo's examination of the theories of Illusionism which is set forth in the two chapters called "Cosmic Illusion: Mind, Dream and Hallucination" and "Reality and the Cosmic Illusion" in the second volume of *The Life Divine*.

Sri Aurobindo opens the first of the two chapters mentioned above with an examination of the ways of mind's working. Immanuel Kant, the founder of the Critical Philosophy, rightly felt that the capacity of Reason must be tested before it started on its metaphysical adventure. Accordingly Kant in his celebrated work "The Critique of Pure Reason", examined the possibilities of Pure Reason as an organ of the knowledge of Reality and found that there were none. Sri Aurobindo seems to go further in his critical attitude. He examines not only the capacity but also the character or nature of mind, for certainly the capacity of a faculty is determined by its basic nature. That is why he analyses in rather great detail the nature of mind and its different levels or grades like the physical mind, the vital mind and the thinking mind. (We may note in passing that Sri Aurobindo comes to the same conclusion as Kant, though for other reasons than those of the German philosopher). The purpose of this analysis is to find out the state of mind which gives rise to the negative philosophies, and in effect Sri Aurobindo traces their psychological origin.

It is not implied, however, that these philosophies have no value either as speculative systems of thought or as doctrines of life because of the fact that a particular state of mind originates them. In fact, they are very powerful and highly metaphysical systems betraying astounding philosophical acumen on the part of their authors. Sri Aurobindo considers both Buddhism and Shankara's philosophy as world-negating. But he has called Buddha

¹ "The Life Divine," Vol. II, pp. 8-9

² Parabrahman, "Collected Poems and Plays," Vol. I p. 143

and Shankara two of the greatest thinkers produced by our land. "In India the philosophy of world-negation has been given formulations of supreme power and value by two of the greatest of her thinkers, Buddha and Shankara."¹ Sri Aurobindo is also fully alive to the value for life of these negative philosophies. For one thing, they correspond "to a truth of existence, a state of conscious realisation which stands at the very summit of our possibility."¹ "And in practice also", says he appreciatively, "the ascetic spirit is an indispensable element in human perfection and even its separate affirmation cannot be avoided so long as the race has not at the other end liberated its intellect and its vital habits from subjection to an always insistent animalism."²

But the appreciation of the negative philosophies is not inconsistent with the assertion that they are the formulations of a particular temperament, of a characteristic outlook on life, even rationalisations of a particular state of the general mind. It is well-known that man's approach towards Reality and life is not so much determined by uninfluenced Pure Reason as by his general mental make-up. And yet that approach dominated by basic temperament or the general character of mind can certainly be justified and made up into a well-articulated system of thought by a brilliant philosophic mind using the most ingenious arguments. But in spite of metaphysical fire-works, the fundamental attitude remains the same because on that is the stamp of the basic character of mind.

It may be said that these philosophies are really based on powerful spiritual experiences and are therefore not bound by any psychological background. Though we accept the first half of the statement, we do not think the second half is justified by facts. Spiritual experiences, like all other experiences, only supply the data of philosophy. While it is irrational and unphilosophic to refuse to take those data into consideration for the purpose of metaphysical thought, we must remember that the experiences by themselves are not philosophy. They have to be co-ordinated, interpreted and systematised by the mind into a philosophy and there also the basic nature of mind will certainly leave its mark on the system of thought thus devised.

Sri Aurobindo's main conclusion in this connection is that the mind has no hold on assured knowledge and is only an instrument of seeking it. Not being in possession of knowledge, it deals in possibilities and constantly swings between affirmation and negation. At a certain stage of this movement, it begins doubting its own most cherished convictions and rejects its own most ambitious constructions. The spirit of negation triumphs over the spirit

¹ "The Life Divine," Vol. II, pp. 184

² *ibid*, Vol. I, p. 36

of affirmation and gives rise to the great world-negating philosophies. We shall later follow in greater detail the steps of Sri Aurobindo's analysis of the vacillating character of mind and the reasons he adduces for it.

Coming to the actual arguments for the Illusionist theory, Sri Aurobindo makes a close examination of the applicability of the analogy of dream and hallucination to the world-experience and his main conclusion is that the analogies are utterly inapplicable. Here also before we actually study his reasons for arriving at this conclusion, we would like to make some general remarks of his view of dream. For that arises from a masterly analysis of the deepest psychological recesses of our personality and gives an entirely different picture of the dream-consciousness from what is drawn by most Vedantic writers. He goes back to the original Upanishadic ideas about the matter and closely follows them in his analysis of it. One of the great contributions of Sri Aurobindo is that he has revived for us the Upanishadic scheme of psychology. He has also given luminous hints about the ancient but now unfrequented ways of the training of consciousness for the purpose of gaining knowledge of Reality. This revival is all the more important because psychology is the corner-stone of the Indian spiritual philosophies. And since these philosophies rightly claim ancestry from the Upanishads, it is supremely important to have acquaintance with the Upanishadic psychology.

The Vedic—and deriving from it the Upanishadic—psychology is very deep and complex and with the forgetting of that psychology, we have also watered down a lot the living sense of the terms that the ancient seer-thinkers used. It is better [therefore that the reader is well-posted about the psychological tradition that Sri Aurobindo follows in his study of dream and the dream-consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo does not take dreams to be merely transcripts of our waking life but shows that they are formations of very subtle and profound layers of consciousness. *Swapna* means for us only an image of the waking consciousness, while in truth it is the builder of subtle but real worlds. So that, in a sense, instead of the dream-world being an unreal replica of the world of our waking consciousness, the latter itself is a gross form of the dream-worlds. We may fail to see the connection between the two kinds of worlds or the two levels of consciousness but that may very well be due to a lack or incapacity of our own understanding and not to any element of exclusiveness in waking and dream consciousnesses. In fact, it is implied that the levels of consciousness which we call waking, dream and dreamless sleep—*Jagrat*, *Swapna* and *Sushupti*, to use the original Upanishadic terms—can be simultaneously held together, integrated and harmonised. So that the different worlds representing the respective levels can be experienced at one

and the same time, with the result that none has to be pronounced unreal. This possibility of the integration of the three levels of consciousness—we can add the supreme Fourth, the *Turiya*—is not admitted by the Mayavadin, who thinks that they exclude and cancel each other. Depending on his limited experience of these three different kinds of world the Mayavadin thinks that when we are awake the dream-world is lost and is therefore unreal in comparison with the waking-world. On the line taken by Sri Aurobindo we are led to a different and realistic conclusion.

The doctrine of the inter-relation, interpenetration and last but not the least, the integration of waking, dream and dreamless sleep—and to crown them all, of the Fourth, the *Turiya*—has important practical consequences for our spiritual life, more so for the seeker of the Integral Yoga who belongs to the prophet of the Divine Life on earth. For the Integral Yoga aspires to evolve a new principle of life and of its evolution in all directions. In order to be able to do its work that principle must overpower all the forces that dominate human existence and life today. It must also lead life to its divine consummation. This means that it must be a supreme consciousness coupled with supreme power. It is evident that this Knowledge-Will can be realised only at the highest height and in the inmost depth of our conscious being. Besides this all-knowing Power, contact with the secret penetralia of our total personality releases many other energies which from behind the veil guide our life and shape our existence. An increasing knowledge of the deeper levels of consciousness, therefore, will enable us to master the now-secret energies and thus refashion life in the world by their help. Knowledge of occultism is considered by Sri Aurobindo an essential element of the integral vision of Reality and the integral vision of Reality is the transformer not only of our individual inner life but also of our outward collective existence.

The Experiential Standpoint in Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy

BY M. DAYA KISHAN

PHILOSOPHY has been generally understood as an attempt at an enquiry or rather determination regarding the 'ultimately Real'—with an implicit or explicit belief that such an attempt can be successfully concluded by an appeal to pure reason itself. It is not contended that philosophers do not appeal to experience or that they do not often declare it all to be ultimately unknowable—but that they always do it on grounds of pure reason and thus have a tang of finality about their sayings derived from their supposedly final analyses of the structures of experience or knowledge or reason itself. The Essentials of this thought had been laid long ago by Eleatics—and Philosophy since then has been nothing but a variation of the same theme. Hegel was the acme of this thought-current—whose identification of the 'real' with the 'rational' was, in fact, the explication of the pre-supposition dominating the whole philosophic movement. His attempts to escape from the usual static consequences of this view through his Dialectic miserably fail—for, a logical dialectic can give you no novelty and even if the real be rational, it can only be the unrolling of a film that is already pre-determined, pre-visioned. This belief in 'pure reason'—which had dominated philosophy for more than two thousand years—got its first rude shock from Schopenhauer who roundly declared intellect not to be an 'organon of reality' at all. Intellect became an instrument of the Will—evolved in the course of Evolution for the fulfilment of certain biological needs—and thus essentially unfit for the knowledge of the Real. Nietzsche in his famous phrase 'Umwertung alles Werte' turned the tables, asked credentials of Truth and exclaimed with an insight that was prophetic, 'Is not false something Divine?' Philosophy, for the first time in two thousand years, felt freed from the obsessional argument of that ancient Eleatic who declared, 'How could that be real which involved contradictions' and thus found the whole world unreal. Nietzsche's impact—particularly on the continent—was tremendous and Philosophy since then has been tainted with irrationalism over which the 'professors of philosophy' continue shaking their heads and pulling their

faces. James and Bergson have spread the disease all round and to be saved from the infection one must read only Kant and Hegel and then close one's eyes—and perhaps ears too. Or one might become a mathematical logician and go about beating his own trumpet, declaring Aristotle to be a fool and an ignoramus, only to find that what one is talking is nothing but 'tautologies' and that logic has got nothing to do with either Existence or Reality. If the mathematical logician has proved anything, he has proved his own irrelevance to the whole problem of Reality and Existence. The thinker of today can range over the whole realm of experience and attempt to articulate it without, in the least, being troubled by any fear of contrary or contradictory formulation—and all this with the sanction of the present-day logician. In fact, contradiction is always a problem within formulation or definition of concepts and can always be avoided by a suitable re-formulation or re-definition of concepts. 'Articulation and interpretation of Experience without any undue influence from the formal law of Contradictions' seems to be the key of present-day philosophic thought. The first powerful result of this obsessional release has been the giving up of the static view of Reality which had so dominated the thinkers of the past. From Schopenhauer to Whitehead the ultimate characterisations of Reality have had one common characteristic—they have always been Dynamic and Creative instead of being Static and Absolute. Whether in Nietzsche or Bergson, in Alexander or Whitehead, in James or Dewey—the characterisation is always the same.

Even the Idealists have not remained uncorrupted—Croce and Collingwood have made history their God. The second great characteristic, also set by Schopenhauer, has been the unconsciousness of this creativity in the ordinary sense of the term. The ideational, analytic, reasoning type of consciousness of which man is usually aware is merely an elastic and complicated instrument to fulfil the unconscious, instinctual impulses from the unconscious. This concept of the Unconscious drawn on a metaphysical scale has today got a firm founding in the work of Freud and his school. Freud's greatest theoretical contribution has been the dissolution of the identity of mind and consciousness, an identity that had warped the imagination and vision of whole ages. One other great result of all this has been the non-acceptance of the present level of human experience as final and thus the acceptance of every attempt at 'Überwindung' of the present limitations as a deep impulsion from the Unconscious to realize new possibilities. Alexander talks of a *nisus* towards the Deity, Whitehead of the impact of an eternal realm of Possibility on that of Actuality within a 'Cosmic Epoch' and Bergson of an intuitional identification with the '*creative élan*' itself.

Schopenhauer himself talked about an absolute cessation of Will on Buddhist lines and Nietzsche of the acceptance of 'Wille zur Macht' in his conception of aristocratic morality. This acceptance of the non-finality of human experience has been strengthened by biological evolution in particular and the idea of evolution in general. "Complete articulation of experience on the multiple facets that it has reached and a continuous attempt at 'Überwindung' of every present limitation in form and level of experience" seems to be the essence of philosophic enterprise as seen through the multi-form confusions of present-day thought. Of course, back-water philosophers are still there—and also those that go on assuring the pseudo-character of all philosophical problems for neither logic nor experience can decide anything. And there are those as well who go on describing some particular aspect of experience with which they are familiar or they have specialized in. Yet in the greatest creative thinkers of today the main trend seems to be held, however halting the grasp, however fitful the vision. And the greatest among these—one whose vision has never faltered, whose grasp has never wavered—is Sri Aurobindo.

Simultaneously a philosopher, a poet and a Yogi, he commands ranges of experience which are accessible to few, yet combines in himself that urge for eternal Überwindung of every level that is attained, of every range that is reached. With a pen and an imagination—nothing short of sublime—he has articulated both the experience and the urge—in words that glow with the sharpened insight of a subtle psychologist or the plumbing imagination of a mystic vision. He is the Future into the Present and the Present full blown—the Present bearing the Past and throbbing with the Future. He stands on the frontiers of the Future—a 'Lover of the Remote', in the terms of Nicolai Hartmann, a 'Prehension of Possibility' in that of Whitehead.

The ordinary thinker of the West—or, for that matter, even of the East—finds this 'Überwindung' difficult to understand and still more difficult to follow. Even his greatest thinkers when they have talked of a 'nisus' or of an 'impact of possibility' or of 'intutional identification'—he has found difficult to understand—while the talk of 'Super-man' has, in his mind, been identified with the two world-wars that he has suffered. How difficult then to understand 'the conscious attempt at integral transmutation'—seen in the background of stupendous inertia of human mind in even believing the possibility of something new. After all, it was only a few decades ago that people could not believe in the aeroplane and the radio, and only a century has passed when people believed that the world was created five thousand years ago and nothing had changed ever since then. As for scientists,

it was only a decade ago that the breaking of the atom was granted a theoretical possibility—but only a theoretical one at that. Yet it is surprising, how could ‘philosophers of Experience’ miss this essential aspect of it—that it is an eternal ‘Überwindung’, an eternal ‘over-coming’ of all that has become, all that has happened? Sri Aurobindo’s firm grasp of this ‘essential intrinsicity’ is revealed in his very first chapter of ‘The Life Divine’. ‘The Human Aspiration’ becomes the central point for Sri Aurobindo’s departure whether in the realms of experiential articulation or experiential transmutation. Both ‘The Life Divine’ and ‘The Synthesis of Yoga’—radiate from this central centre—and one, who has not grasped the central importance of this, would never understand Sri Aurobindo. The experiential standpoint—so firmly grasped by the Upanishadic seers of the past and the foremost thinkers of the present—he firmly holds, both in its stasis and dynamis.

The western thinker of today, while he has mostly given up the logical prejudices of his past—at least, as far as his conscious mind is concerned—seems so far to have accepted the experiential standpoint in its stasis only. Husserl’s ‘phenomenological methodology’—whose power is eternally witnessed by Nicolai Hartmann’s master-work on Ethics—is primarily concerned with a detailed delineation of the ‘Transcendental eidetic Structures’ of Thought without any reference to Volition or Feeling. In fact, the methodology is superbly suited for the articulation of transcendental, static thought-structures—and, yet, possesses no inkling of the Dynamis that lies within all experience. The existential Heidegger, deriving his inspiration from Friedrich Nietzsche and Søren Kierkegaard, finds the ultimate category to be ‘Nothing’ and thus destroys the very possibility of ‘Überwindung’ if possible. This has become clear in the literary variety of Existentialism—prevalent in the France of today, in the writings of Camus and Sartre. These ‘philosophers of the Absurd’ find the ultimate freedom and dignity of man—in *living* while *knowing* it all to be absurd. The answer to these—as to all other such persons—is given by Jaspers, one of their own camp,—that one has either to believe in the reality and value of one’s own experience or one must commit suicide. The dynamic character has been well grasped by the pragmatists in the realm of Truth or Epistemology, by Whitehead and Bergson in the realm of ultimate Reality and by idealist philosophers like Croce and Collingwood in their conception of History. But the pragmatists’ criterion of success has somehow deteriorated into American notions of success and Bergson seems to have left the whole world static to have his *élan* more dynamic. Whitehead alone perceives ‘the fallacy of simple location’ and makes his ‘objects’ ‘centres of creativity’.

radiating into the whole universe, 'prehending possibilities' and thus having the centre of change within themselves. Both Croce and Collingwood fall into a type of Historical Relativism or Historical Absolutism where every judgment becomes either always true or always false. The whole trouble with all these thinkers is that intellectual pre-suppositions of a discarded past still govern their unconscious. A full-fledged acceptance of the experiential standpoint would treat intellectual difficulties and contradictions as experiential contradictions and difficulties unless they were problems in formulation. This contradiction is never to be feared by the philosopher who accepts the articulation of experience and its 'überwindung' as the task of his philosophy. Philosophers have generally held their own mode of mentality to be the only way or at least the most superior way of the functioning of human mind. Yet who would say that the Moore of 'Principia Ethica' or 'Defence of common-sense', the Blake of those terrifying yet entrancing visions thrown on the canvas and the Shakespeare of 'Lear' had the same functioning mode of human mind or even that the analytical philosopher was superior to the painter and the poet? Sri Aurobindo—from the experiential standpoint—has, therefore, given only a very limited and partial validity to the analytical and analytico-synthetical modes of functioning of the human mind. Intuition and Imagination have been given a greater power of penetration into the depths of experience—though they too have their limitations. There is simultaneously the attempt to plumb the deep Inconscient below and to rise into the rarified Super-conscient above. Both are not completely unknown to the human mind—yet the Dive and the Ascent are so rare and so fleeting that one usually doubts whether they were real at all. The Unconscious, today, is soundly established by modern psychology, while the Super-conscient is ever witnessed in the experiences of the great Mystics—and fitfully in those of great poets and artists. Sri Aurobindo has gone even further and tried to find dynamic descriptions and unities in the vital and physical planes of the Inconscient on the one hand and the Higher, Intuitive, Illumined and Over-mind ranges of the Super-conscient on the other.

Mind in its ordinary functioning stands in between these two ranges, but it must not be forgotten that it is not closed on either side. In fact, the general quality of '*discriminating, responsive awareness*' he calls—in the usual Indian tradition —*cit*. This is almost completely identical with Whitehead's 'prehension' which is devoid of any specific mode of human mentality—and yet connotes the essence underlying it. The two other characterizations, '*sat*' and '*anand*', merely state that the last category is not an absolute 'Nihil'

—and that somehow or other it is complete and intrinsic to itself. Yet to Sri Aurobindo—as to every true thinker—this does not exhaust or even completely describe the ultimate ‘Creativity’ that reigns through the whole universe. The characterizations are positive, for a ‘philosopher of experience’ can never deny its ultimate reality and value without destroying the very basis of philosophy itself. Yet in characterizing the dynamis of experience—he has not forgotten, like Bergson, the stasis which it itself vouchsafes. The Eternal Absolute which remains ever unaffected by any change whatsoever is merely a transcription of the subjective experience that a certain part of the Self remains even unaffected whatever may happen to the Psyche. To grasp both the stasis and the dynamis—features equally revealed within experience and equally held however difficult to reconcile on the intellectual plane—to describe the dynamic unities reached and the static structures revealed and continuously to transcend the levels reached, the ranges attained and the heights ascended—is the task of Sri Aurobindo. Not to deny any experience, whether in articulation or transmutation, is his unique achievement among thinkers who have done nothing but either denied or ignored. His is the philosophy of Affirmation—the true philosophy of ‘Experience’—for ‘Experience’ can never deny anything excepting the universalisation, the absolutization of any one of its aspects at the expense of others. Philosophy since its inception—whether in the East or in the West—has known nothing but ‘Denial’. This age-old habit still persists among the thinkers of the present, and few have realized that to deny a thing is merely to ‘disown’ and not to ‘annihilate’ it. The ‘denial’ merely means that you are interested in ‘something else’—that you are considering the thing from some other point outside itself—that, in short, you are viewing the thing ‘instrumentally’ and not ‘intrinsically’. Sri Aurobindo, in this sense, not only goes beyond the thinkers of the past but also beyond most of the spiritual masters that have walked the Orient or the Occident. In the very second and third chapters of his ‘The Life Divine’—he opposes his ‘double affirmation’ to the ascetic’s negation of Matter and the materialist’s denial of Spirit. Both Matter and Spirit, however difficult their intellectual relations, is the call of Sri Aurobindo, for Experience declares it to be so.

The difficulty in understanding Sri Aurobindo is the difficulty in understanding anything except ‘tautologies’. To a Russell the whole world is ultimately ununderstandable, for the world is not a ‘tautology’. The second great difficulty is the intrinsic incapacity of most philosophers to believe that the Shakespearean mind could ever penetrate to truth better than the Moorean mind. Further the philosopher finds it difficult—almost impossible—

to conceive of any other mode of human experiencing and, after all, he too, like most other beings, loves Finality. Further, Logic like a ghost pursues him still and makes impossible the simultaneous assertion of experiential contrarities. Recently a reviewer of S. K. Maitra's 'The philosophy of Sri Aurobindo' in the pages of 'Philosophical Review' found both Mr. Maitra and Sri Aurobindo not yet independent of the usual Indian belief that all Dualisms are but half-way houses to monism. We do not deny that most of the Indian thinkers treat Dualism and Pluralism as inferior stopping places on the royal road to monism, but we are surprised that the critic has not yet found his independence of such a silly controversy as that of monism and pluralism. The source of this can only be the unconscious acceptance of logic that treats them as contradictions and then raises all the age-long objections if one decides to call oneself a monist or a pluralist. Of course, it lessens the problem of the critic, for he can always raise the classical objections against monism, if the author be a monist or those against pluralism, if the author be a pluralist. This continuous re-formulation of the usual objections against any position is a vestigial survival of those days when logic was supposed to provide a clue to reality. But today when the 'experiential standpoint' has been fully accepted, they should be treated as habit survivals from a past when they were supposed to have value. This denial of logic is feared by most thinkers as opening the doors to all sorts of superstitions, irrationalisms, emotionalisms and the giving up of that scientific habit of thought which has been so laboriously acquired in the past. The West has not yet forgotten the Inquisition or the emotional aberrations of the East—and the 'radar' and the 'atom bomb' seem so concrete as to dispel the lure of the 'abstract mirage'. But these people have mistaken the nature of their logic. Logic cannot say one word about existence; in fact, the very existence of any thing is non-logical. It is concerned only with 'hypothetical implications' and as for the scientific standpoint what else can it be excepting the 'experiential' one? As for irrationalism—Gandhi was as much an irrational as Hitler—but who would equate the two? Really speaking, it is a question of value and not of logic, and any confusion between the two would spell nothing but disaster.

These are the difficulties—and many others—that stand in the way of appreciation of this great Master. He combines in himself the foremost trends of the most creative thinkers of today and goes beyond them. Like a shaft of Light he has penetrated into the Future and shown the possibilities that stagger the boldest Imagination. Not a facet of experience has he left untouched, not a corner unexplored. The artist in him meets the philosopher, and the philosopher rises into the Prophet. With one

foot firm in the nether worlds of the Inconscient and the other in the lofty heavens of the Super-conscient above, he stalks this Earth like gods of yore. His is the 'Call of the Infinite' and only the bravest and the mightiest can hear and respond. Not the Everest, or the Pole, or the Ocean does he seek.....but the God that time is in labour to produce. 'To the fathomless Depths and spaceless infinities' does he call and thou, O Adventurer, have thy heart of steel and wings of granite.....for there shall only be thy wings and shoreless infinities.

Mystics and Society

BY SISIR KUMAR GHOSH

“**A**TTEMPTS are sometimes made to have done finally with questionings which have so often been declared insoluble by logical thought and to persuade men to limit their mental activities to the practical and immediate problems of their material existence in the universe; but such evasions are never permanent in their effect. Mankind returns from them with a more vehement impulse of inquiry or a more violent hunger for immediate solution. By that hunger mysticism profits and new religions arise to replace the old that have been destroyed or stripped of significance by a scepticism which could not satisfy because although its business was inquiry, it was unwilling sufficiently to inquire.”¹ In other words, mysticism can change, it cannot die. Amid the disasters of our own age, do we not find that more and more eyes are now turning towards mysticism as the only and real way out? Modern man, in Jung’s phrase, is once more in search of his soul. Of this inquiry and search, the mystics are the pioneers or elders. But what is it that the mystic seeks? Briefly, he seeks to know himself. But his supreme injunction, “Know Thyself”, carries with it the suggestion that we do not know ourselves. Or, probably, in a rough and ready manner we do know what we are, but do not know the much more that we can become. To become what we are, that, then, is what the mystic seeks.

The history of this becoming is man’s true history as it is also the secret burden of his existence. The saints and the seers are a testimony to this endless adventure of man, the human journey. The yogi—to use that word in its most comprehensive sense—has been so far a rarity, a star that dwelt apart, but he need not remain an oddity for all times. The treasures of the spirit or of mysticism may be of far greater worth to mankind and of more imperishable stuff than most of us imagine. Mysticism, which has been usually treated as ego-centric and escapist, may yet prove to be the most realistic and, who knows, realisable end in collective life. What will be the nature of such a life the mind in ignorance cannot foresee or demand to know in detail. Obviously, much that is normal to human life will not be there. We can, however, be sure that the difficulties of a slow

¹ Sri Aurobindo : “The Life Divine”

and painful evolution in the midst of which we find ourselves will turn into an opportunity and find their justification.

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Life is the first mystery of our existence, life occult and vibrant in an otherwise dead and inert universe; but it is not till mind appears that the mystery becomes a problem. The thinking reed, as Pascal described man, is miserable because it thinks, and till the time it can open or overpass itself in a consciousness more comprehensive than the mental, the son of man has no rest in his wanderings in the valley of false glimmer, in the labyrinth of illusion, unreality and appearance. In a sense problems begin and end with the mind.

The problem that weighs most with modern humanity is the just accommodation of its scientific technique and knowledge with a cosy arrangement that will make life worth living for the vast majority which at present it clearly is not. There is nothing unusual or unnatural in the attempt, except in the limited manner in which we try to tackle it and therefore fail. The issue is fundamental: what is the truth or nature of things and how are we to embody it in collective life. This has always been a human objective and in his efforts to solve or reconcile the two—truth and life—man has put on trial every means of social reasoning and every method of social organisation. Yet and alas, the amount of human misery remains very much the same and human nature as unregenerate as ever.

In this mood of enforced sobriety we begin to suspect if there has not been some gap or miscalculation in our equipment and armoury. We have been not so much sinful as ignorant. In the medley of slogans and panaceas for the sake of which people are prepared to kill and be killed, the Time-Spirit points to ends and means which we had previously left aside as unimportant and inessential. It now begins to point to views other than those which present us exclusively with the ideals of the economic man, of technological improvement, of the social economic ultimate, the regimented State with its vast schemes of Education, Suggestion and Propaganda and its use, if need be, of war and violent revolution. To accept the inadequate and pernicious edition of human nature which they assume or advocate is to accept the part for the whole; and to pursue such methods of heightening individual and social behaviour can only land us into deeper difficulties. "It is the utility of Yoga that it opens to us a gate of escape out of the vicious circle of our ordinary human existence." The sheer force of circumstance compels us to face and look for help to the criticism of

life offered by the saints and seers, the yogis and the realised beings, in a word, the mystics. Today we have to take note of their experience, their metaphysics, their psychology and if one may say so, their sociology, or perish. To refuse to listen to the mystics is no longer possible. That many of the thinkers of today—Gerald Heard and Aldous Huxley, for instance—should seem to echo or grope towards their analysis and approach is not surprising. We are probably moving towards a Yogi Age. “The stone which the builders rejected, the same might become the head of the corner.”

Among the more recent works which have focussed attention to the subject,—mainly, one thinks, because of its ‘catchy’ title—is *The Yogi and the Commissar*. According to its author, Arthur Koestler, the issue of modern life has to be decided between two types of people or attitudes, between *Change from Within and Change from Without*. But both, as Koestler sees it, have their dilemmas. What then? At the end of his book he confesses: “Neither the saint nor the revolutionary can save us; only the synthesis of the two. Whether we are capable of achieving it, I do not know.” On the nature of the synthesis he has nothing to say beyond using the word. But the need for synthesis is more crucial than Koestler seems to imagine and unless therefore the race is to fall by the wayside it must aspire to this synthesis. It is our belief that in the confusion of thought and behaviour, the crisis with which evolutionary Nature faces us, the mystical is the only way out. But before we can act on this belief, we have to know what we mean by the mystical way. In this we shall be well-advised not to expect an easy victory or a magical ending of all our ills. The way of the mystics is one of self-mortification, of self-imposed inhibitions and, in the early stages at any rate, it involves an ardour of austerity or tapasya which it would be foolish to minimise. The ancient seers did not exaggerate when they spoke of *kshurasya dhara nishita duratyaya*, sharp as a razor’s edge, difficult of going, hard to traverse is that path.

To the question, how can the mystics help us or what have we to learn from them, it can now safely be answered that what they have to give us is a profounder self-knowledge and world-knowledge, an integral knowledge that will help us to respond better to the integral Reality. The art and science of contemplation will show us, among other things, the unity and inter-relation of Nature, God and Man. The mystics or contemplatives can help us in at least four different ways:—they will correct our world-view; they will point out the right methods for making this world-view effective in our life; this they will do, not by an ‘escape’ from life but by adding to it; and they will do this not only in the life of the individual but also in the

collectivity; incidentally, they will correct the fallacies or limitations of violent revolutions, of our obsession with physical force as the only weapon or 'midwife' of social change.

Some of the functions of the mystical attitude towards life will be frankly purgative or negative but on the whole its direction and result will be positive. Mild-eyed but eternally vigilant, the mystics keep the world "disinfected." "The mystics are a channel through which a little knowledge of reality filters down to our human universe of ignorance and illusion. A totally unmystical world would be a world totally blind and insane."

These are large claims which this essay cannot at once substantiate. It will certainly not remove all doubts on the question. It will be enough if it raises them once again, these questions which we ignore at our peril, whether or not we can immediately solve them. We admit the actuality of a unitive truth of knowledge, more self-fulfilled or revealed, as some would like to say, than our all too human knowledge, "this limited consciousness in whose narrow borders we grope and struggle." This essay takes the stand that the ideal of a spiritual evolution is a fact and that the farther ideal of a society of saints or gnostic beings, *sadhunam rajyam*, the Kingdom of Heaven upon Earth is realisable and must be realised. The future belongs to the mystics. Man, the macrocosm of the microcosm, starts from the animal vitality and its activities but a divine existence is his objective. The mystics who have usually been credited with the technique of deliverance, escape, from the manifestation, from the Wheel of Becoming to the Ineffable and Nirvana may yet prove to be the architects of "the rainbow bridge marrying the soil to the sky." They are the craftsmen of the divine plan, they carry with them the *nisus* of the deity within. Yoga is nothing if it is not skill in works, *yoga karmasu kaushalam*. Once again we reiterate the need for rallying under the flag of clear seeing and self-exceeding instead of 'muddling through' and of self-assertion, of dictatorship, plutocratic or proletarian.

The need and desirability of such an ideal and expectation, what we have called self-exceeding, will be at once questioned by the modern mind. These questions can be conveniently grouped under the following heads: evolution, civilization, science and the technique of heightening individual and social behaviour. Let us take these briefly, one by one.

Spirit and Matter, declare the mystics, are poles of the same Existence, "We speak of the evolution of Life in Matter, the evolution of Mind in

Matter, but evolution is a word which merely states the phenomenon without explaining it. For there seems to be no reason why Life should evolve out of material elements or mind out of living forms, unless we accept the Vedantic solution that Life is already involved in Matter and Mind in Life, because in essence Matter is a form of veiled Life and Life a form of veiled Consciousness. And then there seems to be little objection to a farther step in the series and the admission that mental consciousness may itself be a form and a veil of higher states which are beyond the Mind."

So much for the evolutionary picture and prospect as the mystic sees it in his vision and in his reading of the cosmic situation. That, one might say, is the background for the human drama. The stage is taken up by man's history or the record of his civilization. It is this special kind of organised living which gives man his superiority over the other animals. All our values are values of civilization, they emerge from and replenish it, the common stock. What is the share or contribution of the mystics to this, or are they the enjoyers of privileges which they have done little to produce; and do they not, the objection continues, with the uncertain light of their unattainable dreams, disturb the common man and his dharma, the dharma of his cherished civilization? As regards their claims, did they not have a long time in which to deliver their hypothetical goods?

But the pragmatic test, crudely put, is not a valid test for the mystic experiment. People have been able and have the 'right', it would seem, to say 'No' to the Buddha and Christ. And of the majority that said 'Yes', it was a way of life not always clearly understood or correctly practised. Says Eckhart:

"Some people want to see God with their eyes as they see a cow, and to love Him as they love their cow—for the milk and cheese and profit it brings them. This is how it is with people who love God for the sake of outward wealth or inward comfort. They do not rightly love God who love Him for their own advantage."

The mystic's real task is to transcend human and secular values, to transfigure them. But it is precisely these values for which civilization is supposed to stand. Are mysticism and civilization contradictory, then? No, the mystics have played an important, if not the most important, part in the making of man and civilization. Early civilizations owe a great deal to the creative minority of mystics. In the absence of the sharp division of labour which marks all latter-day civilizations, the early mystics would also be the priests and medicine-men of the tribe. At the same time beneath the careful and elaborate disguise of secret initiation rites, of grotesque mythologies, there was not only a belief but a knowledge. This

idea of mystical knowledge or intuition before the full growth of the intellect or reason is hard to accept unless the idea of history, that is, of unilateral, chronological, growth is abandoned. As Dr. Radin points out in his *Primitive Man as Philosopher*, "Orthodox ethnology has been nothing but an enthusiastic and quite uncritical attempt to apply the Darwinian theory of evolution to the facts of social experience." No progress will be achieved, he suggests, unless scholars rid themselves once and for all of the curious notion that everything possesses a history. The idea of ancient Wisdom could not fit in in the picture the ethnologists painted. It had therefore to go. But it need not. For, without it, it would seem, "we can now form a more accurate idea of the development of the race. The ancient more primitive civilizations held in themselves the elements of the later growth but their early wise men were not scientists and philosophers or men of high intellectual reason but mystics and even mystery-men, occultists, religious seekers; they were seekers after a veiled truth behind things and not of an outward knowledge. The scientists and philosophers came afterwards; they were preceded by the mystics and often like Pythagoras and Plato were to some extent mystics themselves or drew many of their ideas from the mystics."

So, if the mystics enjoyed an importance and were in some ways regarded as the most valuable members of the community it is because they "spoke with authority." That the authority was often mixed up with local and infra-spiritual values is possible, indeed inevitable. That only shows that the mystic is not, *ipso facto*, a transformed person in every part of his being and, secondly, that it is always difficult to mass-produce spiritual values.

But gradually by a process of differentiation the men of God broke away from the men of the world. That was the great withdrawal of the saints and seers to the margin of society. From the centre they moved on to the circumference, and there they have remained during all these centuries. It is certain that asceticism and other-worldliness had a large share in this movement towards isolation, as also the expediency of a separate community. Instead of unduly interfering with the less evolved life round them, the mystics preferred to cultivate their own garden. This they did as trustees and were willing always to impart their knowledge and way of life to whom they considered fit for such instruction and high calling. But they were not democrats, in the sense that they did not think that anyone who thought himself fit could be chosen. The salvation of every one is assured, that is the larger hope. But there is the time factor, and the fitness of the disciple depends, as the Indians would say, on his karma, the stream of his action, tendencies and temperament. It is an open question whether

the mystics were not justified so to confine and concentrate their activities or whether our political bosses and busybodies who hustle the majority, cajole and coerce the voters are more justified. Politics is not enough and politicians move in a vicious circle. For "politicians don't know the nature of Reality. If they did, they wouldn't be politicians...They act in ways which would be appropriate if such a world as they think they live in really existed. But, unfortunately, it does not exist except in their imaginations. Hence nothing that they do is appropriate to the real world. And all their actions are actions of lunatics, and all, as history is there to demonstrate, are more or less completely disastrous."

We have just now said that the politician's world-view is unreal. A rule of life or conduct based on such false and flimsy foundations is bound to fail. Today the politician, along with the engineer, the leader of big business and the military hero, is our ideal and representative man. At any rate he carries the majority with him, and from the point of view of changing human nature or basing our life on a true philosophy there is little to choose between the King Log and the King Stork of politics.

But even more important than politics is the power and prestige of science, and modern science is all on the side of Realpolitic. In fairness to science, it should be added that among the politicians the world over, few or none accept the 'philosophy of science' as the guide for the large-scale activities in which they delight and involve themselves. But such is the halo of science that almost all of our political parties and their mouth-pieces invent, support or bolster their claims to power by pseudo-scientific theories such as those of racial superiority and economic determinism. The politician is an adept in sacrificing science and truth at the altar of expediency. But the politician as a bio-sociological phenomenon will take us further afield. Behind and in some ways above the politician stands the scientist. The man of science is the maker of modern history, the troubled history of our post-industrial era. He gives us the daily bread, to him the millions look up for lead. Having given us the instruments of our existence it is not surprising that he should also give us an instrument of instructions. He supplies not only the base but the superstructure of the modern times. The greatest possession of an age is, it is said, its picture of reality. The picture of reality that the modern age has of itself is the product of its scientists. We have to see what that picture is like and if it is at variance with that given by the mystics. We have to look at this picture and that and supply, if we can, the lacunae in each.

Man's mind has a thirst for explanation, and Nature seems to satisfy that thirst. The human mind is so constituted that an explanation in terms

of identity seems inherently plausible to it. To the scientific view of the world the entity called matter reveals itself to be different patterns of atom or energy or atomic energy. This is the basic unity from which all diversities take their origin and it is to this that they refer. With all this the mystic cosmology is at one. But the scientist begins, as he must, from the bottom up, whereas the mystics begin from above below. In the Vedantic image of cosmic existence the Ashwattha tree has its original source above (in the Eternal), its branches stretching below. The ultimate to which the scientist reduces the principle of things is an ultimate of Matter or Force, the ultimate to which the mystic reduces the world-phenomenon is not an absolute of Matter or Force, but a spiritual Absolute. With regard to this difference of inview and outlook between science and mysticism, we can say at once that the ancient conflict will not be solved by logic arguing on the data of our ordinary physical existence; it can only be done by an extension of our field of consciousness or an unhopd-for increase in our instruments of knowledge. The mystics are agreed that this extension and increase are difficult but well within the capacity of the human individual, at least of some, and that as a matter of fact it has happened in history with sufficient frequency and genuineness as to make it highly probable that this is the next mutation of consciousness towards which our evolution tends, the one far-off divine event, to which the whole creation moves.

This, we emphasise, is not to deny the validity of scientific truths and hypotheses within their special field. Our own hypothesis is that in order to cover all the facts of existence—all, and not merely some of them,—we must admit a hierarchy of the real. Otherwise in our enthusiasm we will deny one in order to assert the other. That is the mental method, and the two negations, the Materialist Denial and the Refusal of the Ascetic, as Sri Aurobindo calls them, are both equally one-sided.

Returning to the subject with which we started, we find that the scientific picture of the world is unreal, limited and inadequate. It is frequently the scientists themselves who point this out. A modern thinker summarises the position thus;

“The scientific picture of the world is what it is because men of science combine this incompetence (to deal with the purely qualitative aspects of reality) with certain special (mathematical) competences. They have no right to claim that this product of incompetence and specialization is a complete picture of reality. As a matter of historical fact, however, this claim has constantly been made.”

Incidentally this ‘impoverished reality’ of science is a parent of the ‘philosophy of meaninglessness’ and that secret anarchism from which

more people suffer than are willing to admit it. The effect of such short-sighted and pseudo-scientific approach to reality in so far as it affects social reform may be summed up as a disregard of the human personality and a free charter to violent revolution and dictatorship. From these consequences there is no escape, unless we can substitute a more correct worldview than the one science has to offer or can offer, unless many or even all of its existing forms are broken or left aside. For almost all our sociological thinking is tainted with these premisses.

That brings us to our final issue,—the issue of social planning. In this the evidence of Professor Laski will be as good as that of any other. In one of his recent books, *Faith, Reason and Civilization*, Laski tells us that “our victory will be thrown away unless we devote it to great ends.” Obviously. But we have first to know what the great ends are or what the Final End is. “I do not think”, Laski says, “that any one can examine with care our contemporary situation without being continually reminded that we again require some faith that will revitalise the human mind.” And Laski has no doubts where to find this revitalising faith,—in the Soviet Republic. According to Professor Laski:

“Despite all its cost in blood and toil and suffering, the dream (of Lenin) has brought unbreakable hope to one-sixth of the surface of the world. It is not, of course, as yet, the fulfilment of the dream. But no one can easily deny that there is in the inner ethos of the Russian Revolution the clue to the secret which each race of men has ever pursued and from which it derived the dynamic of a revitalised freedom.”

The challenge of that “inner ethos” cannot be denied and need not be disparaged. But for the end we seek, from the point of mystic affirmation, the Russian Revolution may be more a symptom than a remedy. The Brave New World of an unspiritualised soviet may turn out to be a thing devoutly to be avoided than to be wished for. Here is what a mind, presumably more sensitive than Laski’s, says on the subject: “The day is not far off when the economic problem will take the back seat where it belongs, and that the arena of the heart and head will be occupied or re-occupied by our real problems—the problem of life and relations, of creation and behaviour, and religion.” The men of economics, politics and science feel acutely disturbed at the way things are going but they are themselves powerless to bring about a permanent solution of our problems. They can tinker, they cannot transform. Without them modern civilisation cannot proceed, with them alone it will collapse. That “difficult alchemy, the transformation of men”, is known only to the mystics. They have the right knowledge and they make the right effort. The mystics know that

“a total spiritual direction given to the whole life and whole nature can alone lift humanity beyond itself.” Even the modern man has occasional glimpses of this truth, little flashes of illumination, as that of northern lights in our material skies. But a glimpse is not enough, it must become an organised intuition, a steady lightning as the Veda puts it. How otherwise are we to welcome Usha, the dawn of God, the dawns that shone out before and those that now must shine? It was of this dawn of “human history” that the ancient seers saw the far-off promise. We must set all our resources to fulfil that promise. In the midst of the modern anarchy the voice of the mystic rings out with clear confidence. We must learn to discern and follow that voice.

In the words of Tagore, the mystic is a bird of the dawn, a fore-runner of the soul-change yet to be. “In Time he waits for the Eternal’s hour.” And, to end on an Aurobindean note,

A date is fixed in the calendar of the Unknown,
 An anniversary of the Birth sublime:
 Our soul shall justify this chequered walk;
 All will come near that now is nought or far.

Sri Aurobindo and Indian Art

BY C. C. DUTT

IS there such a thing as Indian art, is not all true art universal? It is not at all difficult to answer the question. But let us first be clear as to what art precisely is. It is not entirely Beauty. The discernment or the expression of Beauty is not all in art. As we have seen already it can be said to be the expression of the highest Beauty, when it is the same as the supremest Good and the supremest Truth. To put it more explicitly, there are not only aesthetic values, but life values, mind values and soul values that enter into Art. These values can pertain to the life of the individual as well as to the life of a people. Every nation that has a distinctive mode of living and thinking develops a national art of its own which expresses the truth behind its life and thought. The art of each nation has likewise its own conventions and technique which are largely incomprehensible to others. This is the reason why oriental art with its own peculiar characteristics was for a long time unappreciated by the West. Thanks to the efforts of Binyon and others, Chinese and Japanese art obtained occidental recognition some decades ago. But India had to wait still longer, till Havell and Abanindra and the brilliant galaxy of disciples inspired by them brought not only ancient Indian art but the renaissance thereof principally in Bengal, forcibly to the notice of Europe in comparatively recent years. In mentioning Havell and Abanindra we are not forgetting Dr. Ananda Coomarswamy who for a number of decades was known as the staunchest champion of Eastern art and Eastern culture generally. So there is an Indian art which is the expression of Indian life and thought, and we have to see wherein its greatness lies. But just as there is a true Indian art, so there is, and was, even in ancient times, a bogus and fictitious representation thereof. Of pseudo-Indian art of the old days the best example was the sculpture of the Gandhara school, mostly the work of Greek sculptors and their disciples. These carvings in stone have always obtained recognition from European art connoisseurs because they are so little Indian. Not that they are deficient in technique in any way. The Buddhas carved by these Greco-Bactrian sculptors have very fine features of the Hellenic type; their pose is dignified and their well proportioned bodies are draped with marked artistic skill. But, something is lacking and the beautiful and noble expression on

the face does not quite make up for it. Place a Gandharan Buddha side by side with the celebrated Buddha of Sarnath or the Prajna-paramita of Java, and the difference will be perfectly clear. In the first the beauty depicted is very largely external while the two others seek to stress something behind the surface, something nearer to the soul. This would be more apparent to the reader when we consider in greater detail Sri Aurobindo's appraisal of Indian sculpture.

We have now got a government of our own, and it ought to be quite easy to work out a system of education truly national. In such a system artistic training should find a prominent place side by side with the training in science and literature. It is not necessary that every man should be an artist, that is to say a creative artist, but it is essential, in Sri Aurobindo's words, that, "every man should have his artistic faculty developed, his taste trained, his sense of beauty made habitually active, correct and sensitive." A man so brought up will have no use for the ugly, the vulgar, the crude and the inharmonious in life. Little by little the life of the nation all round will become attuned to the call of the Spirit within, a call towards Truth, Good and Beauty. It should be our special duty to revive the true spirit of the ancient Indian art. The renascence in the art of painting, that commenced some years ago, has justified itself. We have now to see that it does not get a setback, or lured into easy and attractive by-paths. In the Master's words, "the taint of occidental ideals and alien and unsuitable methods have to be purged out of our minds."

It has already been mentioned that the art movement of Havell and Abanindra and their disciples took the Western world by surprise; this was largely possible because that world was already getting shaky in its allegiance to the old realistic ideals that it had followed so long. The discovery of Indian art following upon the discovery of the art of the Far East has indeed had a healthy effect on the art-world of the West. But very much more salutary has been the effect on the mind of the Indian himself. He received a most useful shock and was lifted out of the bog in which he was wallowing helplessly. Even so late as sixty years ago the average English-educated Indian revelled in the flashy beauty of Raphael Tuck's calendars and Christmas cards and accepted them as high examples of artistic creation. He had lost his innate sense of beauty and was prepared to seize upon anything that the masterful European had to offer, however vulgar it might be. But he was not in a position to understand and appreciate any European work of art, painting or, sculpture or music, that was truly classical. A travesty of such art was all that was within his grasp. Sri Aurobindo says, "What more flagrant sign of this debacle could there be than the fact that all educated

India hailed the paintings of Raja Ravi Varma, an incompetent imitation of the worst European style, as the glory of the new dawn." Equally ludicrous was the artistic effort of a highly educated Indian poet who only fifty years ago wrote a national anthem of undoubted merit (though a bit sentimental) and set it to the music of "Funiculi—Funicula"—a topical street song of Naples. However let us hope that these days are passed, and that we shall never be caught again in the toils of incongruity and crudeness in art—painting or sculpture or music. Now let us stop a while and consider how this vulgarity creeps into the art of a people. In Europe, side by side with true classical art there has existed a pseudo-classical travesty of it by artist without any genius but possessed of a great deal of skill. Sometimes this travesty has been made by an artist to please a plutocratic patron, sometimes it has been done to tickle the eyes and ears of the uncultured many in order to achieve a cheap fame; sometimes bizarre and eccentric works of art have been pushed forward merely to satisfy the vanity of the artist himself. All this may happen at the best of times, but if a whole country goes mad in the pursuit of wealth, when a whole people can think only in terms of utility at the cost of beauty, the effect is clearly seen on the whole artistic output of that people. Nondescript buildings are built, queer pictures are painted, hideous statuary are carved, all for the delectation of wealthy philistines by artists toiling for hire. Some seventy-five years ago there were some fresco paintings done by a wandering European artist in the house of a very rich merchant in Bombay, the most prominent painting being on the ceiling of the big hall depicting the master of the house as Zeus in a chariot driving through the clouds. During the same period palaces and public buildings galore were built all over India in various bizarre styles embodying, say, a Renaissance dome with a Doric facade and pretty little Indo-Saracenic balconies all round. In the Louvre we find a series of large size paintings painted by Reubens early in the seventeenth century representing his patroness, Queen Marie de Medici, a plump middle-aged lady, in bold costumes and poses. It is even said that a head of Christ done by a famous painter was really a portraiture of Francis I of France. In the Tate gallery in London today there is a life-size picture of a girl on horse back which was done by two famous painters in the nineteenth century—the girl was painted by Millais and the horse by Landseer. It is a wonderfully executed painting, most life-like, but there is very little in it that can be called true art.

Such examples need not be multiplied. They only emphasise the need of a sound artistic education to the young if a country is to build for herself a life of beauty, a life truly worth living. Of the India of today Sri Aurobindo

says "the inspiration and directness of vision which even now subsists among the possessors of the ancient traditions, the inborn skill and taste of the race, the dexterity of the Indian hand and the intuitive gaze of the Indian eye must be recovered and the whole nation lifted again to the high level of the ancient culture—and higher."

In the present article we are concerned directly with the art of India alone. But in order to understand that art, we must have some knowledge of the art of other countries, if for no other reason, at least for the purpose of comparison. Classical European art, medieval art, Renaissance art, modern European art, Far Eastern art, all have a claim on our attention. All these various endeavours are but different aspects, are but feeders, of the one mighty flood of human endeavour. All the manifold activities of man in diverse countries and in diverse spheres of his life are converging towards a single point, the great Synthesis. When that comes all art will be one. But in the meantime each stream must fulfil itself along its own course. We are personally inclined in favour of a pure ideal in art and look upon all hybridization with disapprobation. Yet it must be admitted that harmonising of ideals sometimes leads to newer modes, which though mixed in character are very pleasing to the senses. We have already referred to Gandharan sculpture stigmatised as "bastard" by the Master. Of a less obvious and crude kind are the innovations known as the Indo-Saracenic mode of architecture, the Moghal school of painting and the Kheyal and Thumri styles of music. We shall say nothing of these later styles in music beyond this that the classical Dhrupad best appeals to us personally. The Master has said nothing. Indo-Saracenic architecture and Moghal painting have, however, both been considered fully by Sri Aurobindo. We shall refer to them again at their proper places.

All truly great work of art, Indian or Western, is at the beginning an act of intuition. The intuition is direct and relates to some truth of life, some form that this truth takes in the human mind. No real artistic work starts from an intellectual idea or an imagination in the intellect. The European artist brings his intuition down into his ordinary mind and gets his intelligence to clothe it with a mental stuff "which will render its form to the moved reason, emotion, aesthesis." There the artist sets eye and hand to represent the real thing that he has seen. The more ordinary painter and sculptor start and finish with an imitation of life and nature and never get to the subtle truth behind. In any case, the appeal in European art is not straight to the vision of the deepest self within, but to the outward soul. It awakens powerfully the sensuous, the vital, the emotional, the intellectual and imaginative being. Of the spiritual being we get only as much as is

possible through the external man. The Infinite and its godheads remain concealed behind many veils.

The theory of Indian art is different. It is not that all artistic work in India attains the ideal. But it is only by the best that we can judge its intrinsic worth. Sri Aurobindo thus characterises Indian art in one short sentence, "Indian art is in fact identified in its spiritual aim and principle with the rest of Indian culture." That is to say, its highest aim is to reveal something of the Self, the Infinite, the Divine to the regard of the soul through its manifestations in finite nature, through its visible powers and forms and symbols. Even when this art comes down to the material plane it does not altogether lose its greater vision and its divine stamp. In all really great work of Indian art, life is seen in the self, in the infinite, in something spiritual beyond,—these subtle things form the background of the visible representation. This vision in the self is the method of the Indian artist, this is what he is bound to acquire by the canons of his craft. His medium of expression is, no doubt, form and tune and colour as he sees them in nature, but he is not bound to a realistic representation thereof. They are not his primary preoccupation in art; they are only vehicles for carrying "on them a world of things which have already taken spiritual form in his mind." We shall see this clearly when we go on to a more detailed consideration of particular works of art. But one thing we must get firmly fixed in our mind. "Indian architecture, painting, sculpture are not only intimately one in inspiration with the central things in Indian philosophy, religion, Yoga, culture, but a specially intense expression of their significance." Such art, intuitive and spiritual in its character and significance, must be looked at with the intuitive and spiritual vision. For to the superficial eye its hidden message is bound to remain for ever hidden.

The most ancient art had always been faithful to the original truth of the Soul. It was the art of Greece that came down from that level and strove to express the visible reality of the senses. The Greek took the forms of Nature as they appeared to him, idealised them to some extent, seeing and emphasizing their best aspects. This idealisation did not, however, last and in the end Greek art devoted itself to the simple service of the intellect and the senses. Still it never degenerated to the level of Modern realism which appears to take pleasure in laying equal stress on the beautiful and the ugly in every object, in pushing forward all deformities and blemishes along with the harmony and beauty of every form. In the Middle Ages art sought to return to a profounder urge than that of the intellect and the senses, and even achieved a partial success but it never quite got out of obscurity into the deeper knowledge that informs the artistic work

of the East. "In recent times the West has been searching in various directions for a new form in Art which will transcend the obvious and external and go deep down in order to discover the true significance of the outer objects in Nature. The search has not so far met with any success, but the discovery of Indian art of late years is bound to give it a proper direction. The walls of hide-bound prejudice, so characteristic of the Nineteenth Century, are crumbling down and it is generally realised today that Indian sculpture and Indian painting have canons of their own and cannot be judged by either a Hellenistic or a realistic standard."

Of course, Indian art is nearer to other Oriental art than it is to the art of the West. But still there is something in it, a dominant note which differentiates it from say, the art of China or Japan. The general characteristic of all Eastern art is that it seeks to go beyond the emotions and the senses. Sri Aurobindo says, "A Japanese landscape of snow and hill is as much an image of the soul as Buddha or a flame-haired spirit of the thunder-bolt." Still there is a difference and it is this: other Oriental art, though it goes beyond the external, remains in the cosmic, while in Indian art there is a constant endeavour to go beyond Nature into the Supernatural, into the infinite bliss of the Divine. It is thus clear that the Indian artist does not strive after producing a figure exactly resembling the natural, the anatomy perfect and the details scrupulously executed. He pays no heed to these demands, though he generally succeeds in imparting to his creation a great deal of charm and grace along with a living rhythm and movement. This we notice in all good images of Natarajan, the dancing Shiva. It would be interesting to find out how he achieves this. When we look closely at an old bronze piece such as Mr. Gangooly has described in his *South Indian Bronzes*, we find that its body is not a representation of human flesh and human life, but a "form of divine life, an embodiment of the gods." Physical beauty has been transcended; sometimes it is totally disregarded, often a something psychically beautiful takes its place.

Some of the bronze figures reproduced in Gangooly's book are those of Bhaktas (devotees) of Shiva or Vishnu. In these the artist has sought to express their "pure and absolute status of the mind and heart in which the soul manifests its essential being void of all that is petty, transient, disturbed and restless." The expression of the face and eyes, the poise of the body, every curve and every detail of it are expressive of supreme bliss and the loving surrender of the Bhakta. To the Indian mind the meaning of this embodied ecstasy would be perfectly clear, while the Westerner would miss altogether the true inner significance and call the figure a crude and anatomically inaccurate representation of a man at prayer.

Looking closely at the images of the gods themselves, we see that, in the eyes of the sculptor, they never were of this world at all, they were dwellers in the infinite, the finite form of bronze was only a medium through which infinity expressed itself. This infinity expresses itself in various ways—supreme power, supreme consciousness, supreme bliss, love, light and knowledge—but always one has to look behind the outer form and discover the truth underlying it. The appeal therefore of such a figure is not to the external senses, not even to the comprehension and imagination of the human mind, but to the soul—through the senses to the supra-sensuous. In short, this is “a sacred and hieratic art, expressive of the profound thought of Indian philosophy and the deep passion of Indian worship.”

Yet, Sri Aurobindo says, there is a difference between these comparatively recent bronze figures and the majestic statuary in stone belonging to an earlier period. In the bronzes we see more of grace and rhythm, while in the others we find more of sublime grandeur. The general character of Buddhist art is that it expresses in its figures the static and absolute Divine (Purusha), while Hindu art tends to combine in its creations the static and the dynamic Divine (Purusha and Prakriti). In the earlier stone sculpture the prevailing note was of sublime repose; even when there was violent movement represented, the movement was subordinated to the repose. In some of the southern bronzes reproduced in Gangooly's book Sri Aurobindo found that the prevailing motive was repose, but a large majority of them expressed life and movement and rhythm.

The best example of a figure in stone expressive of sublime repose is the well-known image of the Dhyanī Buddha of Sarnath, while the most notable example of a bronze figure representing life and movement, but movement subordinated to repose is the image of Natarajan, King of dancers, already referred to. We shall revert to the form and significance of the Dhyanī Buddha when we go over Sri Aurobindo's chapter on Indian sculpture. Let us close this section with a brief analysis of the figure of Natarajan. It shows Shiva dancing the cosmic dance. The arms, legs, in fact the whole body is represented to be in a state of violent but rhythmic motion—“the mad bliss of the cosmic movement”—while the face is in perfect repose, in a high state of self-absorbed concentration. If we cover up the face and head, the figure would express violent movement only; if we covered up the body, the head and face would appear to be part of a figure in supreme repose.

Let us now see what Sri Aurobindo tells us about the significance of Indian architecture in his “Defence of Indian Culture.” Of all great oriental work it can be said that it does not easily disclose its hidden motive to a

casual visitor, one who comes to it merely in a spirit of æsthetic curiosity. This is the reason why the Japanese have put up their temples and Buddhas far away from human habitations where those who are truly interested can go and look at them with the necessary concentration and reverence. Indian architecture demands this concentration and self-identification even more. In India our sacred buildings are definitely "the architectural self-expression of an ancient spiritual and religious culture. We can appraise this art only if we are conscious of the spiritual and religious meaning underlying its outer æsthetic and mental aspect. It has also to be remembered that in this work of appraisement, we must not bring in any occidental memories, or make use of occidental standards." A comparison with Greek Parthenon or Italian church or Duomo or Campanile or even the great Gothic cathedrals of mediaeval France would only be an intrusion of "a fatally foreign and disturbing element." An immixture of standards and canons is worse than useless in the work we have to do.

It is necessary to note that hardly any secular buildings of old India, her palaces and assembly halls have survived the ravage of time. So practically nothing can be said either about their external beauty or their inner meaning. But as far as sacred architecture goes, whatever their age or style, it can be said that they all go "back to something timelessly ancient," something that was in the past and yet will again be in the future. It matters not to what particular deity an Indian temple has been erected, it is inwardly and really an altar raised to the eternal Self. This must be understood and everything else seen in the light of that understanding. The mere artistic eye will only see the outward beauty and miss the reality. The intelligent mind will never be able to reach the supra-rational truth, the truth of the Spirit in the temple. We must approach such an artistic creation with quite another seeking, some intuitive light in our own soul must look for the soul in it.

This is where the Western critic of Indian architecture goes wrong. Unable to see the true motive behind, he cannot discern wherein lies the unity that is essential in all work of art. He sees in it merely the work of a skilful craftsman who has executed a mass of incoherent details, with no apparent object whatsoever. Archer, whose ill-considered criticism of Indian culture generally elicited Sri Aurobindo's brilliant defence thereof in *The Arya*, is blinder than other European critics and most loud-spoken in his denunciation of Indian architecture. He dislikes massive structure as a rule. Naturally the huge temples of South India have failed to evoke his admiration except as marvels of construction. He realises that they are huge, but fails to see in that hugeness either unity or sublimity. But, Sri

Aurobindo asks, how can there be a marvel of construction without any unity of design, or a mighty massive structure without greatness. Archer complains that ponderousness prevails everywhere, everything is overwrought, all parts writhing with bizarre half-human figures which are senseless and seem to have no connection with the whole. How does he know that they are senseless? He has admittedly not made any effort to find that out. Very rightly the Master stigmatises his attitude as self-satisfied complacency. The Northern temples of India, which have not quite such a lavish display of ogres and demons and bizarre scroll-work on them, have not gained quite such a strong disapprobation as the temples of the South. But that is all, there is nothing to show that the critic understood them any better. The mixed Moslem architecture known as Indo-Saracenic has alone escaped the general condemnation of being barbaric. It is indeed strange that these critics, some of them men of education, should have failed to realise that Indian art may have a canon of its own, that there may be a principle of unity in our architecture which they have failed to see because of their alien way of thinking. We can understand, however, why they fail to see our idea of oneness. They have been used to "the Greek unity gained by much suppression and a sparing use of detail and circumstance or the Gothic unity got by casting every thing into the mould of a single spiritual aspiration," which are quite different from the Indian conception of it. The sacred architecture of India always aims at depicting the eternal oneness of the Divine underlying and upholding the wonderful diversity of the created universe. Its massive design and significantly rich and varied ornamental work starting from oneness and returning to it cannot be comprehended by one who sees with the eye only and dwells on the beauty of the form, as caught by the imaginative mind. This applies to architecture as much as to sculpture and painting, applies to those works that are epic in their grandeur as well as to structures smaller in size which the Master calls a lyric of the Infinite. The European critic may say what he likes posing as a superior person, but an Indian should not be swayed by the European's prejudices or by his way of looking at things. He should approach a sacred building of his own country with reverence, throwing himself wide open to its subtle influence. The true meaning will then disclose itself gradually and the age-long message of his country's culture make itself heard through beauty of the structure before him. Sri Aurobindo suggests that one should go to a temple far from human habitation where the background and environment are quite natural. He suggests two names, Kalahasti and Sinhachalam, both belonging to South India. The two temples are alike in motive, but different in execution. They should be seen, the Master says, not

detached from the environment, but in unity with the sky and the landscape, low-lying or hilly. Thus regarded, these man-made structures will appear as one in motive with their setting. Sri Aurobindo describes the two structures in these lucid words. "One of these buildings climbs up—bold, massive in projection, up piled in the greatness of a forceful but sure ascent, preserving its range and tune to the last, the other soars from the strength of its base, in the grace and emotion of a curving mass to a rounded summit and crowning symbol. There is in both a constant, subtle yet pronounced lessening from the base towards the top, but at each stage a repetition of the same form, the same multiplicity of insistence, the same crowded fulness and indented relief, but one maintains its multiple endeavour and inclination to the last, the other ends in a single sign." The description is so lucid that it calls up before the mind's eye a clear vision of the two temples and even suggests the environment of each. The massive base resting on the earth, the gradual taper as the edifice rises, the thronged figures indicative of infinite multiplicity, the symbolic ending at the top against the vast expanse of the sky all express, not absence of unity, but a tremendous oneness. When the whole is seen thus, every detail becomes easy of understanding.

The method of interpretation set forth above applies to all Dravidian temples from Madura and Tanjore down to small but beautiful shrines by the way-side. The motive is the same for all. The architecture of the north is not quite of the same kind, the basic style is different; but in interpreting them we have to use the same method—intuitive and spiritual. The result is also the same. The outer beauty is but an expression of the inner spiritual truth. Just as there is an innate unity in the various aspects of Indian spirituality and religious feeling, so is there a unity of all the creations of hieratic architecture. There are various styles and motives, but they all express that unity.

The European critic is constantly bringing up his objection to the thronging detail and ornament so common in temple architecture, urging that this emphasising of detail mars the unity of design. But this argument only shows that the critic has allowed his mind to dwell on the details without relating them to the original oneness in the spirit. It is the same with regard to the world. If we allow our mind to dwell on and stress the many in the universe, we find only "a crowded plurality." To arrive at unity we have to reduce or suppress what we have seen and go back to realise the self, the infinite reality underneath. The rich ornament and detail in an Indian temple represent the infinite variety of creation on all planes and suggests infinite oneness of the endless multiplicity of things.

Archer in his attack on Indian architecture repeated again and again *ad nauseam* his one theme that the profusion of ornamental work in the Hindu temples, especially of South India, was barbarous and bizarre, and that it gave no relief to the eye and allowed no calm. Sri Aurobindo answers that the "unity on which all is upborne carries in itself the infinite space and calm of the spiritual realisation" and that consequently no unfilled spaces of a superficial kind were necessary, the eye being there only an entry to the soul of the art. The massiveness of the southern temples has been discussed. They could not be otherwise than massive—representing, as they do, the cosmic seen as a whole. Some of the sacred edifices in the north, says Sri Aurobindo, have "a singular grace, a luminous lightness.....a rich delicacy of beauty in their ornate fullness." Not lightness and clarity of the Greek kind, "clarity of naked nobleness," but a remarkable blending of opposites such as characterises the spirit of Indian religion as well as art. We need not repeat here Sri Aurobindo's reply to the critic's minor strictures. They proceed merely from narrowness and perversity—a refusal to admit the beauty of forms new to him. There is one comment however of Mr. Archer that deserves mention here because it has been made also by more broad-minded critics like Professor Geddes. It is this, that in these huge buildings there is always a "monstrous effect of terror and gloom." The comment is totally unwarranted. The Indian knows that terror and gloom are incompatible with his religion, art and literature. If ever they appear in his religion it is only to be dissipated at once. Even when they appear, says the Master, "they are always sustained by a supporting and helping presence, an eternal greatness and calm or love or Delight behind." Take the Great God Mahadeva, for instance. He is Rudra the fierce, Maheshwara the austere Mahayogi: but he is also Shiva the auspicious, Ashutosha the auspicious, the support and refuge of men. Again, take Natarajan the dancing Shiva, wrongly described as Shiva destroying the universe. If the poise of the body, the mad fling of the limbs frightens anybody he has only to turn to the serene beauty of the face in repose to be reassured immediately. In the image of Kali, where even the face is afire with the zeal of destroying the powers of Evil, we have the two right hands in the poise of Vara and Abhaya—one saying "fear not" and the other promising a boon to the faithful. Only one word more on this subject. In the ornament of the sacred temples we find depicted various unhuman and half-human figures. The European critic probably does not know, or does not believe that these formidable looking creatures actually exist on certain planes other than our own and it is perfectly consonant with the spirit of Indian art not to exclude them from

any comprehensive design representing creation. They form part of the wonderful diversity of the universe.

Sri Aurobindo closes his chapter on Indian architecture with a couple of pages on Indo-Moslem architectural art; we have referred already to this art as an example of blending of ideals. All over India we find mosques and other edifices of what is called Indo-Saracenic design, most of them, at least the best of them, belonging to the Moghul period. Sri Aurobindo finds in many of them "an impress of the robust and bold Afghan and Moghul temperament." Still on the whole he considers them a typically Indian creation. The decorative skill that one sees in these buildings are to be found in many Hindu temples of Northern India. A lyric grace was developing in North India even before the Moslem advent, and this found its place in the Indo-Saracenic buildings blended with purely Islamic motives. This grace finds favour with Archer, at least herein he finds something that he can understand. It is its rational beauty, refinement and grace, normal, fair, refreshing after the monstrous riot of Hindu Yogic hallucination and nightmare. There is a lot more about the beautiful domes and minarets, stately halls and majestic gateways, that Archer writes. This is all by way of praising this hybrid style at the expense of the monstrosities of Hindu art. But how can a critic of his kind bestow unstinted praise on anything Indian! So he goes on to say that there is no moral value in all this beauty that is wholly sensuous. As moral suggestions are the last things one expects from architecture, we can summarily set aside this remark of Mr. Archer. His last remark is still more inane. He finds Moghul architecture to be effeminate and decadent—an absurd description for the mind of the time of "the Great Moghul!" We are ourselves not very fond of the Indo-Saracenic style, at least not of some of its aspects. The very narrow-waisted dome is certainly inferior in grandeur to the true Saracenic dome, a representation of the vault of the sky underneath which the Arab of the desert said his prayers. The lotus petals arranged round the base of Indo-Moslem dome looks anomalous and does not add to its beauty. Looking at the Taj Mahal, which is undoubtedly the finest example of this style, what hurts our eyes most is the slenderness of the minarets around it. Why could they not have been thicker? In Bijapur we have two old buildings, the Gol Gumbaz and the Ibrahim Roza. The latter has a narrow waisted dome of the Taj Mahal kind and the rest of the building in keeping with it. The former, a huge massive structure, many storeys high, has a dome of the pure Saracenic kind, a dome of tremendous size, on top, and round it are four minarets of commensurate thickness forming an eminently suitable setting for the central structure,

To our understanding this Gol Gumbaz is nearer to "the vast spiritual content" of the Indian mind than other buildings of this style which are prettier, more graceful to the eye. The Taj as an emblem, as a memory of a love that defies death, is unique, its wonderful fretwork and mosaic and other decorations typifying the passionate undying love of a fond husband, but in many ways some of the buildings of Fatehpur-Sikri are fairer examples of Indo-Moslem art. About these Sri Aurobindo says, "The buildings of Fatehpur-Sikri are not monuments of an effeminate luxurious decadencebut give form to a nobility, power and beauty which lay hold upon but do not wallow on the earth." Of the best examples of Indo-Saracenic art we can say that although the all-powerful spiritual motive of the old Hindu temples is not there, "other elements of life not ignored by Indian culture and gaining on it since the classical times are here brought out under a new influence and are still penetrated with some radiant glow of a superior lustre."

Thoughts on Tantra

BY T. V. KAPALI SASTRY

I

WE propose to consider certain features of Tantra Shastra with special reference to Chandi, famous as Durga.

Upadhyaya is a Tantrika; he knows the art of propitiating the spirits—deities as he calls them—and averts certain sorts of evil that may otherwise befall his clients. Among other things, he knows and puts into practice with remarkable success a curious art. He casts a spell over a given area, definite and reasonably limited of course, and goes away, and that becomes a prohibited area for the cobra. This man's method has nothing to do with the tact of the snake-charmer or the use of any material means to rope in or drive out the venomous reptile. An incident which took place just a few weeks ago would go to point out the character of the genuine magic, or we may add, of the occult significance of the phenomenon we would presently relate.

We may call it superstition, but it is a popular belief, quite often verified and therefore dynamic that to kill a cobra is fraught with danger to the killer and to the household that is, or promises to become, its home or a resort of its frequent visitation. Now this happened in the sister's house of my young friend who returned here a fortnight ago after paying a short visit to his ancestral home. Thus, it is a first-hand report since he was present there at the time and mention of the details would repay the attention paid to it. The family with children has been living in the house for many years; but all on a sudden, one day a cobra was sighted within their lodging, to the annoyance of the inmates. Certainly there was awe, but awe with a dash of an almost religious sentiment. The hooded creature became a frequent visitor, unharmed, though unwanted. What was to be done? To their good luck, Upadhyaya in his itinerary had come to the township. When he was approached with the problem, he agreed to take up the question. He sat for a while and did some ritual, very simple and formal, got up and said "I have done the thing, *dig-bandha*; the quarters are closed, the fence is completed, the enclosure is impenetrable." Next day, what took place was indeed amazing. The cobra did not turn up, but that itself may be accounted for somehow, as due to causes other than

the magic of the *mantrika*. But the miracle of a mongoose running about in the house in place of the cobra, solved the problem of the family, while winning laurels for the Upadhyaya.

We can give by all means our own explanation, that the man was in contact with the spirit *kshudra devata* presiding over the cobra group, or some other explanation. The Tantrik says he consulted his goddess, she consented to help him. Whatever way we look at such a phenomenon, it remains a fact and cannot be explained away. Well, this is undoubtedly a Tantric act.

Similar and still more remarkable incidents which are brought about by human agency through unusual powers are within our personal knowledge and enable us to conclude that those who wield such powers are usually ignorant and do not know how they get them, but know the occult formulae, the technique, or even have the influence and capacity transmitted to them by an adept in the field. But all these are generally despised by people whose lives are influenced by religious or moral sentiments. Yet these go by the name of Tantra. Usually, the Tantrik of this sort does not prosper even in the ways of ignorance, lives a miserable life, ends his life in misery.

Such practices in some form or other are not confined to this country. A journalist hailing from England toured this country some years ago and wrote a book in which he devoted sufficient number of pages to Spirituality in India and in illustration of it gave an account of his meeting a genuine famous saint. What he wrote was informative and proved useful to many who were drawn to the subject and to such centres of genuine spiritual Force to which he had made reference. The book made him famous overnight, we might say deservedly, so much that he came to be looked upon as a Guru himself by some good people. But later when he went to search for some genuine magic in Egypt, he saw and learnt many things about cobras and giant scorpions and wrote again; but it was a steep descent from the sublime to the ridiculous, a fine illustration of the contrast between spirituality and spiritualism.

There are certain Tantrik books which are indeed abominable; some of them are published and available in the market, but are definitely wicked. The misleading element lies in the titles of these books such as Siddha Shankara Tantra, Dattatreya Tantra etc. and quite often in the childish, if not mischievous sham that the subject matter purports to be all instruction or information that Shiva once upon a time gave to Parvati. But we need not dilate upon this despicable side of Tantra which includes not only transaction with the elemental spirits and other powers of a low order,

but also the degradation of high ideals, of true spirituality of the Shakta cult into the "left-hand worship" *vamachara* represented by the five "M"s. But before leaving this lowest aspect of Tantra which in some respects corresponds to the spiritualism or spiritism of the West, and includes in a way the aims of the modern attempts of Mesmerism, hypnotism and certain sorts of groping occultism, we may remark that the method employed depends upon external devices, uses of certain "occult" drugs which are believed to attract the spirit-force or spirit-being as well as certain figures and diagrams and secret code-words.

The Tantra Shastra proper,—leaving aside the lower forms and the baser accretions—is strictly the science of the Mantras. If on one side, it is vulgar and discredited, as briefly noted above, on the other side it is exalted, combines in itself the highest form of Yoga and knowledge and devotion so much so that it might be termed a synthesis on broad lines, of practical methods pursued by aspirants of different persuasions. By the use of the Mantra, mystic syllable or syllables, powers of concentration are developed to open the centres that are ordinarily closed in the human system. And these centres, when opened, become steps in the stair-case, in the rising tier of Consciousness functioning as windows upon a wider and wider existence, of a larger world teeming with forces and beings whom one may contact on the way or ignore and move onward towards the highest reach, the Supreme Consciousness. The Tantric Yoga at its highest aims at realisation of the highest Consciousness and the powers natural to it. There are certain features that distinguish it from other Yogas of which brief mention here may not be out of place. Certain lines of Yoga can be practised without any serious belief in the existence of God, a higher Intelligence, and one can indeed meet with success if the aim be the usual control of mind, a certain mastery of vital functionings in the body and increase in the vital capacity for holding the will and exercise of the breath control and mind control, and concentration leading to trance. Certainly, Raja Yoga can be practised, not to talk of Hatha Yoga, without any devotion to or faith in God. Faith in the Guide, the Guru, faith in the efficacy of the line followed, faith in one's own capacity to achieve the end in view—this threefold faith is enough, but necessary, as indeed it is necessary for the Tantrik Yoga also, while in the latter the element of devotion with faith in the higher power and grace of Shakti is *sine qua non* from the very beginning. And it has an advantage over Jnana Yoga in that it relies and depends upon the guidance of the Shakti for the fruitful course of the discipline followed. We thus see that the Tantra aims very high, and the practice carries within it the essentials of many disciplines.

II

Now that we have briefly noted the two extreme sides of the Tantra Shastra, we shall proceed to consider here a question connected with Mantras that is generally ignored by scholars who deliberate, philosophise and write upon the subject. It is perfectly true that the aim of the Tantra is to achieve the Highest, and the Mantra is used as a means for concentration to open the centres of consciousness for the gradual unfoldment of knowledge and power leading to the ultimate goal. But we must pause here and see if the Mantra is just a mechanical device, means for concentration and nothing else. There is a truth often ignored by philosophers of Tantra, not by those who take to the Mantra Sadhana. It is this that there are many deities with the Supreme Deity at the summit and through any of them, by his or her help, one can get at the Supreme or the Supreme can through any of the deities favour the initiate and give him the necessary lift. The point to be noted here is that the Supreme Deity does not negate or annul the existence of the deities but on the other hand uses them for (his or) her purpose or allows them free scope to deal with the Sadhaka in accordance with the spirit and manner of his approach. And these deities are realities, entities, beings with intelligence and power appropriate to the levels they occupy in the hierarchy of the grades of Cosmic existence. Once we recognise the fact that there are distinct Powers, beings whose influence man can receive, who can be contacted through proper means, we have accepted that the lower the levels they occupy, the easier the contact effected. It is this fact that accounts for the black magic part of the Tantra to which we referred as degrading and despicable. For there are good as well as evil forces and beings, spirits, evil especially in the levels that are nearer the Earth-plane.

But there are higher beings, with a larger field for their activity, with knowledge and power proper to their station and natural to the order they belong to in the Cosmic scale. There are still higher beings, Gods and Goddesses proper, with cosmic functionings and nearer to the Supreme Cosmic Godhead who presides over the creation. They are, one may say, vehicles, instruments, with distinct characteristics, and therefore individual Gods and Goddesses in that sense; they may be, some of them, in closer touch or conscious union with the Supreme Deity, whose work they carry out. Now the Mantra-sadhana claims to win the favour and grace of any of these, not necessarily for reaching the supreme goal, though there is always that possibility. The Sadhaka aims at first to be in the good graces of the God or Goddess, so that he can get the necessary guidance in life. As he

progresses, and finds some measure of success in the Sadhana, if his deity happens to be a being of a lower order he may prosper for a time in the line of his choice, and very likely close his career in failure. If the deity of his choice be of a higher order and his Sadhana proceeds with certain signs of help from his *ishtha devata*, his progress brings about a change in his attitude to life, and his devotion to the deity grows stronger and stronger than his attractions to the aims of common life with which he may have started the Sadhana for success in life through the favour of a Devata. And in the end, the Sadhana naturally leads the Sadhaka beyond his first aims, either by fulfilling or cancelling them, to the larger and higher aim of life which indeed is the goal of all lines of approach to the Supreme. But if from the very start, the Sadhaka takes to the Mantra of any particular Personality and form of the Supreme Deity with the sole object of realising the highest through the favour of the God or Goddess he worships, and the Sadhana proceeds on proper lines, safe passage is assured and the burden of the Sadhana is taken on hand by the Deity in the long run, through various stages of communion and contact, and unmistakable touches of the influence or the Presence frequently sensed with certitude.

Mantra-sadhana proceeds on the basis that there are distinct Individualities, Gods, Goddesses with Forces and beings dependent on them and emanating from them, even as they themselves are emanations and personalities of the Supreme; and this fact will be evident from a casual perusal of source-books on Tantra-Shastra, and some of the standard books like Prapanchasara whose authorship is ascribed to Shankaracharya. But nowhere is it so pronounced and clearly brought to light as in the second and third section of the threefold Episode of the Devi-mahatmya to which we would refer later on. Here we shall confine ourselves to one question, the subject of Mantra itself. On the basis of the teachings of the Tantra Shastra itself, it is but proper to dismiss as puerile the apparently rational explanation of the use of the Mantra as a device for concentration. For in that case the Mantra becomes just one of the many mechanical devices that can be used,—a kith of crystal-gazing which also is a device. The Tantric claim is different, the Mantra is held to be a powerful instrument; itself is a power clothed in sound-symbol that is potent and lives in its sphere, and is meant to appeal directly to the deity for favour and help and ultimately to reveal the light and power and presence of the deity itself. The Mantra has an inherent power, but its manifestation depends upon the fulfilment of one of the two conditions, either the Guru who gives the Mantra must be a Mantra-siddha, an adept, capable of awakening

the initiate to the deeper vibrations of the Mantra-consciousness; or the disciple must be ripe enough for awakening the Mantra-power to ring and pulsate with the inner consciousness or the deeper being in him that is the meeting ground for the worshipped deity and worshipping soul. If both the conditions are present, then it goes without saying that success naturally becomes easier. It is certainly true that what is achieved by the Mantra Sadhana can be achieved by other means also, by pure devotion or else by higher forms of Yoga for which all is possible, on principle. But that fact does not detract from the value and characteristic line of Mantra Sadhana, as a definite way of approach not only to a particular deity, but even to the Supreme. For it combines in itself devotion and concentration for a life disciplined to commune with the Devata which by itself can confer upon the Sadhaka all knowledge of Yoga and the opening of the inner centres of power and knowledge. This is possible of course when the Mantra-siddhi is accomplished bringing with it what is called *sakshatkara*, the Presence and consciousness of it. Besides, in certain lines of Tantric Sadhana, the Mantra is looked upon as a sound-body of the Devata which fact is particularly stressed in the case of certain Mantras,—in this connection Shri-Vidya is notable. Also, in the case of certain Devatas, prominence is not given to the repetition of the Mantra, but to the devotional aspect in which recitals play a dominant role, reinforcing the aspirational capacity enlightening the faith and will to achieve the end which is the attainment of the Anugraha of the adored Deity. Favour or even grace is not an adequate rendering of this Sanskrit word. For the expression denotes an act on the part of the Adored, an action with effect that continues without break, a gracious smile or glance that is cast upon the worshipper, who is seized and held in it so closely that time or place could not separate the human and the Divine, Jiva and Deva. This is the significance of the term, *anu-graha*, (*grah* to seize and hold, with *anu*, to pursue or follow i.e. without interruption.)

III

We have just mentioned the importance of recitals—what is called Parayana, in certain worship and this is specially applicable to the worship of Chandi as advocated in the Saptashati, the famous Devi-mahatmya. It is not that the Mantra-japa is not important or has no place in this cult. It has its place and importance for the purpose of *Japa*, inaudible repetition of the mystic syllables and *Dhyana*, silent meditation. But the recital of the text assumes a greater importance in this worship because the text

itself takes the place of the Mantra treated as sacred utterance of inspiration; it is surcharged with a purifying potency that clears the atmosphere and appeals in supplication, and with confidence for the manifestation of the presence of the Devi. A word is necessary here to draw the line of distinction between the Mantra for Japa and Mantra for recital. In the former, inward repetition in silence leading to concentration is the characteristic way, and the Mantra is usually short. It can be even a single syllable, what is called Seed-letter, *bijakshara*, and is related to a particular God or Goddess; it has its particular feature, even subtle form and colour perceptible to the subtle vision, and in it is centred the gravity of the God or Goddess. Naturally, in such Sadhanas, the Yogic element with personal responsibility preponderates until the gracious Presence becomes clear, *prasanna*, and the Sadhaka receives the grace, *prasada* of the Devata. It is said of Ramakrishna Paramahansa, that when he uttered a mantra, or a seed-sound, say Rum, Agni signified by the sound-symbol appeared to his vision with his occult native colour. But Paramahansa was an exceptional case, because he was already in the Mother-consciousness and from there he could objectify any subtle truth, that is not manifest in the outer existence.

But the Mantra used in Parayana is audibly recited, it has an effect on the surroundings, in the general atmosphere; it contributes greatly to the development of the devotional element which indeed becomes very effective as it progresses and invokes the Presence to dominate the place of worship and govern and guide the devotee. We may remark in passing that all devotional compositions, verse or prose or musical texts are not Mantras, nor are Mantras always in verse or in prose form. We must note the fact that the Tantric Mantra is usually short, even a single syllable packed with the force or the symbolic sense related to the particular deity. Occasionally, verses from some inspired poems or scriptural texts like the Saptashati are treated and used as Mantra. But the Vedic hymns are of a different order, they are all Mantras where the meaning is as important as the text, and generally meant for recitals, though a short verse may be selected for Japa and meditation on the meaning of the Mantra with devotion to the Devata, as is done in the case of the famous Gayatri. But usually all Vedic Mantras are used for recitals while a few selected passages have become famous as texts for Japa.

To return to the Saptashati. This is famous as a sacred text which occupies a special place as a Tantric scripture. There is no other work in the whole of the Tantra Shastra which enjoys such a deserved reputation as an assured and effective means for the worship of the Devi. It is a special line of approach to the Supreme Goddess Durga 'not easy of access' to mortals.

as is meant by the term. Though Mahakali, Mahalakshmi, Mahasaraswati are her special Manifestations as spoken of in the text, they are not the same as those that come under the category of what is called the Ten Grand Sciences (occult and spiritual), Dasha-Mahavidyas. For the latter are different and independent, and each one of them is directly the Supreme Goddess communed with and worshipped in accordance with certain rules and rituals formulated in the respective Tantras. Here in this worship of Durga otherwise called Chandi, recital of the text is much more important than the Japa of the Mantra, not to speak of the rituals, though these have certainly their place in all Tantric worship as they provide for a material basis to form a nodus for the physical and outward act of adoration. So much importance is attached to the sacredness of the text that every verse in it is treated as a Mantra in the Katyayani Tantra. And this is done in spite of the fact that all the 700 verses do not describe the glory of the Goddess, as there are many verses which are narratives related to the origin and end of the stories of the Devi. Besides, there has been a tradition that the Chandi worship has a Vedic basis. How far and in what sense it is correct to say that this Durga worship has Vedic basis is a question we shall consider within the brief space we have set for ourselves here. But before doing so it is necessary to have an idea of the subject matter of the Saptashati. It is not necessary here to dwell at length on the details of the story as it is so popular and well-known and could be gathered from the simple and easy, though powerful, text itself or otherwise from translations. Let us then recall the whole story and state it in a few passages.

Two unlucky men meet in a forest, come to know of each other's pitiable plight, for one had lost his kingdom, and another all his wealth. They consult a sage there, who answers their questions, clears their doubts and at their request gives them instructions in regard to the worship of Durga. They carry out the instructions, engage themselves in worship and austere meditation, *tapas*, and at the end of three years, they had bestowed upon them, the Grace of the Devi who revealed Herself to them and granted their request. Suratha, the Kshatriya, got back his kingdom, while Samadhi, the Vaishya got what he asked for, supreme Knowledge. This is the story. Now, apart from instructions in the secrets of worship (*rahasyokta vidhanena*), that the sage Medhas gave the two devotees at the close of their meeting, he first spoke to them of the Glory of the supreme Goddess, illustrating it in three episodes, *charitas* of the Devi—the first related to Mahakali, the terrible Ruler of the Night, the Yoga-nidra of Hari, who is the destroyer of Madhu and Kaitabha; the second to Mahalakshmi, who makes an end of Mahishasura, and the third to Mahasaraswati, who deals the

death-blow to Shumbha and Nishumbha. It is not possible to enter into a discussion of the significance of these exploits of the Goddess; for they must form part of a separate subject for consideration. Suffice it to note these events are not happenings on the Earth-place, or of this age which is the cycle of Vaivasavata Manu. But the description of the battles between the Goddess with her Vibhutis and emanations on one side and the Asuras and their forces on the other are significant and throw light on happenings and activities in a different world and place which have their bearing on Earth-life and human existence. Another notable fact is that there are truths hidden from our vision, regarding good and evil forces, *daivic* and *asuric*, contending for supremacy over this world, this Earth whose fate quite often hangs in the balance, but is ultimately decided in her favour by the intervention of the Supreme Power, Mahashakti of the Lord of the Universe. And this will be evident to any casual reader of the Saptashati; there are memorable passages that often ring in our ears in which the promise of intervention in crises made by the Devi constitutes a scripture-monument to the Divine vigilance over human affairs on Earth. The inspiring verses in which the words of assurance are couched are untranslatable; yet even a feeble echo of it in English may convey something of the spirit breathed in these prophetic utterances that the sage-author of the Saptashati communicates to us.

In the first Charita we find the sage affirming "Though She is eternal, immanent in the whole Universe which is Her embodiment, She takes birth again and again, incarnates Herself in a special form of Her choice for the successful regime of the Gods, Devas—for establishing Divine Principles in the world-order that its functionings may increasingly harmonise with the eternal verities and higher laws of the creative Godhead." Again in the second Charita when the Gods regained their lost kingdom by the destruction of the Asura by the Devi and adored and sung Her glory, the Goddess in Her grandeur, highly pleased, promises to come to the rescue of the Gods whenever there was need and they were put to trouble by the Asuric forces, the Demons. Similarly, in the third and the last Charita, when the task of the Mother was over, the Gods adored Her and chanted hymns in praise of Her prowess, of Her manifestations and of Her motherly heart, She was pleased and again gave Her word of assurance to stand by the side of the Gods in times of need and stress, and also declared that She would ever be present in places where, these hymns were recited and used in prayers. Finally the Devi speaks of Her future incarnations.

It is certainly a fact of religious experience of devotees even today that in such recitals and places of worship something of Her Presence, of Her

Grace is felt and it cannot be understood, much less appreciated by those who have no inkling into or not cared to investigate into these aspects of life devoted to higher and godward life. Nor can these stories of Gods and Asuras and their battles be intelligible to those who seriously think that the Physical universe and material existence are the sole and fundamental Reality. Here we cannot resist the temptation of quoting Sri Aurobindo. The best way of understanding the meaning of these stories of battles between Gods and Asuras is to ponder over and grasp the sense and spirit of certain passages in his writings in a different connection. We shall quote a passage or two that will be helpful to the thoughtful reader to know for himself the import of such episodes.

"The soul of man is a world full of beings, a kingdom in which armies clash to help or hinder a supreme conquest, a house where the gods are our guests and which the demons strive to possess." "The soul is a battlefield full of helpers and hunters, friends and enemies, all this lives, teems, is personal, is conscious, is active."

A word more before we proceed to the question of the Vedic basis of the Chandi. This scripture is included in the Markandeya Purana. The Purana purports to be a dialogue between Markandeya and Kroshtuki. Therefore he is the sage, the Rishi, the seer, of the whole scripture. The mystical reverence in which the Devimahatmya is held can be best understood if we remember a tradition that comes down to us through orthodox Vaidiks who are worshippers of Chandi. The Saptashati, they hold, is a great *Artha Shastra* i.e. a Shastra that teaches us the means of realising all ends in life, not *artha* in the restricted sense of wealth or Economics. Thus the standard texts for the four purposes of life, *purushartha*, are in order: Manu for Dharma Shastra (which is said to have been originally 700 verses), Devi-mahatmya for Artha, Vatsayana for Kama (which also is said to have been at first 700 sutras) and the Bhagavad Gita for Moksha (which is also 700). Whether there is significance in the number 700 or not is not quite material for our consideration here. But the tradition shows that the aim of Saptashati is not in a limited or one-sided direction. It includes the aims of life here and the supreme purpose as well. And this is borne out in the story of Suratha and Samadhi by the Power and Knowledge they were respectively favoured with, for Kingdom represents supreme Power and enjoyment, *bhoga*, in the world. It is not an exclusive this-worldliness or other-worldliness whose fulfilment is vouchsafed in the Saptashati. Even when Suratha longs for regaining his lost kingdom, it is not the same old self of the miserable man that grabs at the power bestowed on him by the grace of the Goddess. For, before he started the

Sadhana in accordance with the instructions he received from the sage, he understood and assimilated the truths about the Devi and the world and the cause of suffering therein, and thus qualified himself for a rigorous life and turned towards the Divine Mother; for only thus is an effective discipline possible, to earn and receive her favour and help. And it is necessary to note that the sage laid stress in the very beginning on the fact that all misery owes its origin to *mamata*, the sense of mine. Suratha, then, had the added difficulty of having the world-enjoyment by renouncing it as not mine, *bhoga* by *tyaga*, while the man for Knowledge, Samadhi, the Vaishya, had unburdened himself of worldly cares and joys as well. Both started the same Sadhana, driven by misery; both changed, each in his own way. A few lines (free rendering in English) from the first chapter in which the sage expounds the root cause of all suffering and the remedy thereof would go to show the high aim of the worship advocated in the Saptashati.

"All creatures have a consciousness of their own and are instinct with the desire to preserve themselves and their knowledge is spread over the objects of senses. Of the created beings, some are born day-blind, some night-blind, while others are, day and night, of equal vision. The knowledge of man is in no way better than birds and beasts which show great skill in preserving *themselves* and what is *theirs*. Here again the sense and feeling of 'mine' is spread over all creation—man and beast alike; know then, the cause of all this is Ignorance, Avidya which is not the creation of any being on earth or in heaven. It is a product of the workings of Mahamaya, the great illusory Power of Lord Vishnu. She is the power for bondage as well as for liberation, for ignorance and for knowledge. By Her the whole universe is set in motion revolving incessantly and containing in it all that is mobile and immobile. She, in short, is the Power of Hari, the Lord of the Universe—called Yoga Nidra, the Sleep-power of Yoga or the super-conscious poise of the Supreme Being."

Now we will turn to the Vedic basis of the 'Chandi'. It is traced to the 125th hymn of the tenth Book of the Rig Veda. We get the clue from a line in the closing verses of the Saptashati where it is stated that the Devi Sukta was being used for Japa "*devisuktam param japam*". But we do not find anything in the Rig Veda relating to story, ritual, or forms of worship mentioned in the Saptashati. But if we look into the spirit and substance of the Vedic hymn, we do find for the first time, also for the last time in the Rig Veda, thought and spirit and Mantra-force vying with one another in revealing and making felt the Divine afflatus in the Riks of Vak, Ambhrini. For the latter name is patronymic, she the seer, Rishika, being the daughter of Ambhrina, Her name itself is Vak, She sees the revealed truths of the

Godhead, finds the inspired word to give expression to them in the shape of this hymn of eight verses. There are many hymns in the tenth Book of the Rig Veda where we find that the name of the seer, Rishi, is also the name of the Devata. This can be explained by the fact that in such hymns the seer is one with the Devata, experiences and lives in conscious union with what he adores; and it is such realisations that account for the identity of names as in the hymns of Vaikuntha, Lava and others. But this is not to say that there are not to be found such realisations recorded in the other Mandalas of the Rig Veda. But there quite often the Rishi's name is addressed in such a way or with a double meaning that it is applicable to the God spoken of in the Rik. There are other seers who speak of their realisations of the supreme Being on the dynamic side and proclaim "I am Manu, I am Surya..." as is to be found in the hymns of Vamadeva in the fourth Mandala. But there the seer's name is retained separately.

Here, in the case of the Devi Sukta, though the seer's realisation of identity with the Supreme Vak, the Creative Word, which in the language of the Tantra is Para Shakti may account for the identity of the Name, (Vak as applied to the Rishika as well as to the Devata) it will be more correct to say that the Female Energy of the Supreme Godhead, *para-devata*, realising Herself in or choosing the embodiment of Vak Ambhrini, utters the Word, the Mantra. This is at once in consonance with the proclamation made in the Vedic Hymn, and the spirit and substance of Saptashati. Let us then close the subject with an English rendering of the famous Hymn—the Devi Sukta leaving the reader to ponder over the mighty words of 'Vak' and see if it is not in line with the high thought, spirit and purpose of the Durga Saptashati.

1. I walk with the Vasus and Rudras, with the Adityas, as also with the All-gods, Vishva Devas.

Mitra and Varuna, both I hold aloft, even so Indra and Agni I do, and the Ashwin-twins too.

2. I uphold and cherish the Soma that is to be pressed out (for the delight of the Gods) and am the supporter of the divine sculptor Twashtri, and of Bhaga and Pushan. I hold the wealth for the sacrificer who reaches to the Gods the pleasing offerings of Soma and Havis.

3. The Queen, I am the dispenser of wealth; conscious, I am the first among the Gods (for whom the sacrifice is meant).

Such am I (the One) and the Gods have found me established in the Many, permeating and taking possession of the Manifold (existence).

4. It is by Me (by the sole Power) that one eats his food, sees, breathes, and hears what is said.

They that ignore me (with their thought not turned to me) run to ruin. .
Hear, I declare to thee, the truth of faith, hearken!

5. Of my own account, I announce this (truth) which the Gods as well as men strive to reach.

Whomsoever I love, I make him mighty, him a Brahman, him a Rishi, him a man of pure understanding.

6. For Rudra I stretch the bow—for the destruction of the tyrant, of the Veda-hater (Brahma-dvit). On the people I bestow equal joy and I have permeated Heaven and Earth.

7. I gave birth to the Father (Heaven) at the summit of This (creation, Earth). My origin is in the Waters in the Inner Ocean.* Thence I extend pervading all the worlds; and yonder Heaven I closely touch and penetrate with the showering and flowing body of mine *varshmana*.

8. Like the winds I blow vehemently, myself commencing all the worlds; far beyond the heavens, far (beneath) the Earth—so vast by my largeness I have become.

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*Ocean is the image of the Infinite Consciousness and Being—in the conception of the ancients; the word 'inner' before the 'ocean' (antas-samudra) here removes the veil over the Truth indicated by Ocean and Waters, *samudra* and *apah*.

A Critique of the Pramanas

BY K. C. VARADACHARI

IN recent years, thanks to the serious impacts of psychology and para-psychology, we have come to recognize that the hard and fast divisions that have marked our philosophical attitudes are being blurred. Yet it is also true that whilst considerable efforts have been made to make philosophical constructions which have dominant scientific methods, there have also come into existence extreme abstract mathematical formulations of thought called by the common name Symbolic Logic, which is claimed to make our thought and view of reality really scientific and to afford a truer picture of the structure of thought. Such abstract constructions or formal principles have truth, as Professor A. N. Whitehead remarked, though not the whole truth. But why should it be so? Is it not likely that there is some truth about our intellectual apprehension, though we are also becoming increasingly aware that intellect and its reasoning are incapable of understanding certain aspects of experience. Intellect seems to be quite adequate for all the purposes of objective enquiry or objective knowledge as sciences have been showing to us. It is true that neither the ideal of science nor that of philosophy as defined by idealists of the objectivist schools who consider that the business of philosophy is to interpret the results of sciences seems to be a quest that can ever end. Our intellect and our logic are essentially limited or restricted to the fields of sensory or observational experience, and since quantity and measurement have been considered to belong truly to the scientific approach, and since the causal explanation of the mechanical variety the only admissible category of explanation, we are almost at the end of our philosophical pursuit, not because it is completed but because it has to wait on the experiences and explanations of the scientists. But this movement of thought is neither necessary nor inevitable. We have indeed over again to investigate into the nature of our experience. After Kant's great copernican Critiques we have been very much anxious to explain our experiences on the bases of the categories which we were warned by him not to use beyond limits.¹ It is true that whilst we were well advised we did not find it altogether

¹ *Tarkapratiṣṭhānti: Vedānta Sūtra*

to our taste, and indeed Kant himself showed that our experiences did overflow the categories of Pure Reason.¹ With Hegel we were enabled to traverse a longer distance, perhaps steeper, towards our present idealistic constructions but we also know that these were evidently too formal and based on the dialectic of opposites which whilst promising what is called the explanation of evolution towards a grand synthesis or the Absolute, the coherent Whole, blessed it with an inner contradiction. This inner contradiction may indeed be the secret principle of evolution or dynamism. It is to Marx we owe this unseemly revelation of the intrinsic weakness—or is it strength and richness of Hegel?—who showed this up by inverting the whole process and making dialectic not formal but actual, not merely logically necessary but economically deterministic, and historically inevitable. But what most philosophers in the West were concerned with was not the fundamental meaning of Reality that could be constructed with the help of the logical intellect refreshed by the deliverances of sense intuition and the aesthetic demand for an archetechtonic or system. We have also witnessed our scientists becoming philosophers and in the writings of Eddington, Whitehead and Russel we have varied speculative adventures in construction.² At best sometimes we have been regaled with 'reinterpretations of terms whose meanings have been absorbed in the counters of thought'—so as to make them current sterling money so to speak.

But it must be said to the credit of pragmatism that it has found its best formulation in modern times, and despite its humanism, it has almost been forgotten as a system of thought or a new way, for the business of philosophy seems to be, according to it, the interpretation of the scientific results which are daily coming to us, a task which is perpetual if not exactly Sisyphean.

We have indeed another philosophical school which is the organismic conception. It is quite old in one sense but its modern version is rather nebulous, and it does not appear to be as simple as the name sounds. Reality is organism, a living and dynamic whole comprising lesser wholes, evolving within itself, whose parts are in continuous processes maintaining the whole. This is the objective version. That it can have a subjective version and that this subjective version is mystical and more profound is the view that is held by many. It is fundamentally a unity of many, real, individual

¹ *Aprāpya manasā saha; Taittiriya Upanishad.*

² A. N. Whitehead: The use of philosophy is to maintain an active novelty of fundamental ideas illuminating the social system...by introduction of novel verbal characterization rationally co-ordinated.

many having unique points of view, value and yet mystically inter-related with the Whole which they represent, subserve, reveal or manifest.

Our biological interests have become dominant over our mechanical interpretations, due not only to ourselves being biological results but also to the fact that the mechanical view of reality makes a mere aggregation of points of view insufficient even to explain the processes of Nature which seem to conform to the laws of mind and life. The organismic view is much more real and true as a system than the other. It has become indeed a fundamental principle of explanation for the perceived diversity and unity of the whole, and in one sense has helped the refutation of the unfounded charge of anthropomorphism against such explanations. There is no doubt that pluralism and monism appear to be not so much alternative explanations of the same groups of facts but two extreme views of the fundamental biune Reality. Thus, as it has been recognized even by absolute idealists, the concept of Organism or Organic Unity does help a fuller appreciation of the nature of Reality than abstract monism or concrete pluralism. But it has also been shown that this organismic theory is yet in the process of birth in the writings of Whitehead. The concept of organism in his philosophy posits that the process be 'conceived as a complex activity with internal relations between its various factors'. Everything in the universe takes note of everything else, which means that it recognizes or feels the presence of everything else. If Leibniz affirmed that the monadic mirroring is on the level of reason (*ratio*), Whitehead's view leads to an emotional cognition which is introspective in advanced organisms. His doctrine of internal relations in a dynamic whole affirms that every organism or part of the organism is on a level of prehension which is available to it from the level of feeling not merely with the whole but with each other part. Thus it is clear that there is a universal intersubjective intercourse. And it is clear also that as long as our cognitive nature is tied to external relations of subject and object so long we can never really grasp or solve the problem of the internal dynamic unity of awareness within the whole. It is true that some realists are content to be mere pluralists and yet try to arrive at unity by means of co-operative synthesis or unity by postulating a 'sense of community' or unity within limitations. This postulate of the sense of community requires a metaphysical justification and it is to be found in the concept of the organic unity of all within the whole. The instinct or sense of community that manifests itself is a result or consequence of the nature of the Whole rather than its cause.

There is much truth in the assertion that our inferential or rationalistic thought translates into forms of thought or ideas whatever it receives

whether it is of the material world reflected by the human mind or of the spiritual. Our metaphysical understanding need not coincide with the dialectical process. Indeed all that materialism has been affirming is that the processes and contradictions available in our concepts are only the reflections, translations into the language of thought of contradictions which exist in the phenomena owing to the contradictory nature of their common foundation, namely, movement. If then we can decide that our materialism is but a partial formulation of a further ultimate factor, the metaphysical concept of Reality would become more adequate and the manner, how the Reality of such a measure or nature is, could be shown. The contradiction between the dialectical absolutists and the dialectical materialists is then resolvable by a transcendence due to the higher perception of values. But then we are again confronted with the problem of human axiology, and we find that despite Signor Croce's formulation of another form of the dialectic namely the 'Dialectic of Distincts'—(and that is truer to the spiritual nature of the Real)—the spirit is essentially limited to the affirmation of its nature by the human spirit or self. But we owe it to Signor Croce who assured us of the fact that these two dialectics are at work always, and achieve so to speak a progress that is remarkable for its double ascension in respect of the interpenetrative unity as well as dynamic progress that reveals the necessary polarity of all movement, which in a sense comprises horizontal as well as vertical possibilities. Being and Becoming and Non-Being are forces inherent in Reality or rather distinguishable factors in Reality which establish the interpenetrative fusion of the values of Beauty and Truth and Goodness in and for the individual and the whole. There are perhaps other values which are subordinate to this integrative action of the Spirit and it must also be understood that this integrative action is one of concrete Freedom. By this action we register at once the continuity of the ideal purpose or action of the Spirit as the inner meaning or significance of all history. At any rate we are forced to consider the importance of the relation between the spiritual and the material as being somehow established within the organic unity of the embodied being, the individual who is the bearer of ultimate values as well as the revealer of the ultimate values at every stage of the evolutionary process, more or less. The goal of absolute perfection is there and it is this that makes possible the ascent of the individual by a kind of reaction or opposition to the past. It is indeed impossible for us to predict how it would happen and when; but it is the inevitable destiny of the individual, the task his spiritual aspiration has set to itself. It is in the individual that we should find the fulfilment of this perfect unity of the spiritual and the material (including the vital and the

mental), the subjective and the objective, the being and the becoming. It is true that this cannot altogether be due to the inner aspiration of the individual; under the concept of the materialist schools and the rationalists, this aspiration for becoming more is claimed to be inherent within or emerging out of the manifold responses—a type of *avayavi* (whole) emerging out of the *avayavas* (parts). But it is irrational to claim that there is this possibility in each of the parts or in their aggregation as such. Rather it is likely that this aspiration is a veiled movement of the eternal purpose of the Spiritual from within, acting both as an impulsion from behind (*sañkalpa*) and as an ideal ahead of us (*puruṣārtha*). It is in the human mind that we find these two aspects of the same eternal spirit uniting the aspiration and the ideal and forging the perfect unity of the past with the eternal present and the inevitable future. Indeed as it has been stated there is the descent from above and an ascent from below whose meeting place is the human heart. Thus the metaphysical view makes this the pattern of the whole of Reality; or rather the individual whom we know and understand will help us to understand the pattern of the Reality of which he is an integral (real) part. But this itself is a presumption taken from the mystical doctrine, whose pale counterpart is the view of the similarity of all the parts of a compound, in the structure of the atom or the molecule. It is indeed not like that exactly with each individual, but there is, as we can see, the element of identity which is most important. This identity is at once the fundamental principle of the unity of all within the Reality as well as the difference that is clearly discernible as the modes of that Reality, because this double rôle of the Absolute as at once the One within and subsuming all the many and the multiplicity which manifests itself in all the many without undergoing any kind of essential change in any of its characteristics, though getting translated in varying degrees in different planes of consciousness or prehension. It is clear that this double status of the One Reality or the Self (to use the organistic word) which alone can function in this manner of a *unitas multiplex* category is real, though it does in a sense go against the principles of abstract logic. This is due not to the impossibility of any thought to grasp the inner pattern of the Reality,—for this is the promise of the mystics that we can know the pattern of Reality though we may not be able to know the content of It at all or completely ever—but due to the habit of thought to be restricted, adapted to the individual in his finiteness, in his sensory experience and practical struggles with the environment which are limited or conditioned by the ability of the organism to deal with it. This conditioning and limitation of the organism itself to the practical and the immediate utilities though very useful

for immediate survival, does indeed breed conflicts between the several members of the whole each of which has its own problems of survival: and struggle is the result. This struggle is undoubtedly a part of the reality in so far as the ascent to a larger point of view, a poise of security, is concerned. But that is the representation of the principle of sacrifice which the logical form of opposition and resolution represents or subsumption symbolises. Real security comes from conscious subordination to the transcendent, sacrifice or offering to the higher and the fuller and the universal.

Thus we must grant that our assumptions will determine the nature of the reality that we are going to construct. We have seen that the autonomy of the inferential reason or the abstract understanding has been most effectively denied by all alike. Its sovereignty is overthrown, and mostly because of its sensist affiliations. Whether we are pragmatists or idealists or common sense men or scientists, the regulative principles of thought are no longer of the mere reason. More likely the regulative principles are of the practical and aesthetic order, and decided by our economic and socio-political predilections or spiritual intuitions and aspirations and in many cases by such personality factors as are determined by our subliminal and unconscious being. Metaphysics is not impossible but it has been forced to abandon the old routes of construction. In being loyal to sensist deliverances and hypothetical theories, intellect has been strictly confined to the construction of an abstract speculum (or measure) and not as we should very much like to have a *speculum sub specie eterni*.

I consider that this would be an appropriate occasion to evaluate the sources of our right knowledge (*pramāṇas*) and offer a criticism. I deem it very necessary that Indian philosophers and logicians should undertake a new evaluation of the categories of thought and especially make a thorough study of the use to which the *pramāṇas* have been put by Indian logicians. We have a right to do it if only for the simple reason that most logical treatises (of the scholastic and-syncretist variety) are much more concerned with the analytical survey of these *pramāṇas* than the synthetical, and incidentally there has crept into their methodology a bias towards materialistic and sensist understanding. I offer on this occasion my remarks on this undertaking with the fervent hope that it would lead to a more close and critical thinking which will enable us to evolve a logic more in tune with the fundamental philosophy of Spirit espoused by Seers of the Infinite than before.

Nyaya as logic considers primarily the *pramāṇas*, the instruments of right knowledge. It enumerates them and distinguishes them; though these *pramāṇas* are not identical they all co-operate in the act of knowing an object. The same object or *prameya* may be the object of certain *pramāṇas*, though

some objects may not be objects of certain *pramāṇas* or some aspects of them be beyond some of these *pramāṇas*. But it is the hope of every philosopher ultimately to render all experience integral, that is to say, to enable all instruments of knowledge to function synthetically without opposition or conflict, or organically in one word. This is possible only when all these are subordinated to or directed by mystical intuition.

Accordingly each one of the *pramāṇas* may enable us to understand some aspect of the object that falls within its competence. It is also possible that there will always be the mutual or reciprocal interaction between these several *pramāṇas* so as to grant integrated knowledge. The several *pramāṇas*, if there be more than one, will grant fuller and profounder meaning to the object in so far as that is an object of knowledge, knowledge understood in its fullest sense. It is just likely that certain features or factors may be beyond the capability of one or more of these *pramāṇas*. We have also to recognize that no metaphysics or theory of Reality as such can claim that Reality is beyond the scope of any or all *pramāṇas*; for that would only lead to agnosticism. It would be our task to discover that instrument of knowledge which would enable us to round off our knowledge to perfection and go beyond the intellectual and sensory ways of knowing which are either private or abstractly universal and seriously limited to the avenues of our experience as finite individuals. It is true that some well-known thinkers hold that it is impossible to know Reality so long as we are tied to the subject-object relationship, and that Reality is indescribable¹ which is said to mean that it is either an experience transcendent to all relationships or indescribable as this or that. Absolute Reality, as I have already remarked, may be beyond the comprehension of some of the *pramāṇas* that we know of and utilize but that it is unknowable wholly is not acceptable. Indeed it is enunciated by the mystic teaching that the Spirit reveals Itself to the individual chosen by It—*tanūm svām vivṛuṇute*.² It can be known and experienced and entered into.

What are the *pramāṇas*? They are considered to be usually four viz. *pratyakṣa*, *anumāna*, *upamāna* and *śabda*. To this are added *smṛiti*, *āgama* *itihāsa*, and *purāṇa*; some have added *arthāpatti*. I shall not labour here to show the meaning of these *pramāṇas* except to point out that each plays a definite rôle in the structure of the integral experience into an organic unity.³

Pratyakṣa deals with the sensible aspect of Reality. *Pratyakṣa* as the name

¹ But see the Kenopanishad teaching: *pratibodha viditam matam*

² Kathopanishad.

³ *Taittiriya Ar. 1. 2. 1. smṛtiḥ pratyakṣam aitihiyam anumānas catuṣṭayam etair āditya-mandalam sarvair eva vidhāryate.*

implies is the knowledge that is a resultant of response to stimulus. A construction of a universe primarily based on sense-experiences is impossible. Materialists really posit the complete objectivity of these sense-impressions and objects and without much consistent thinking. Sensists are incapable of constructing a universe except with the aid of such irrational concepts as chance, faith or animal faith, as George Santayana claims. Confronted with private and personal and communicable experiences they are not satisfied with the mere deliverances of the senses. These extra-personal experiences do indeed affirm the objectivity of the objects perceived and their independence of individual volition. Common experiences in the world are the strongest argument for the existence of objective truth, which is universal, and of the identity or similarity of the structure of minds. Irrationality there is as much of the objects, however, as there may be of the subjects, although to think of a relational reciprocity between the two is inevitable and useful for practical purposes. It cements and systematises all those parts of our experiences as could be systematised and there is much that refuses to fit in with the pattern presented by inferential thought. It is an ideal in which all experiences could be systematised, an ideal without any conceivable end. Thus *anumāna* (which literally means that which follows) follows these sense-experiences and becomes the chief function of thought in us.

There is of course the limitation of the play of inference to the field of the perceived data though this limitation is in some definite manner surpassed or transcended by the fact of similarity in the experiences of objects and their relating by minds. Whether we are prepared to agree to the fact on the basis of pure inference or not we have to assume that mind-activity is alike in all beings having a similar physical constitution. This assumption is important and there have been learned but inconclusive treatises and discussions on the problem of how we do know other minds. In this context I can remark that *Sabara Svāmīn* in his commentary on the *Purva mīmāṃsā sūtras* has noted that our knowledge of other minds is based not on inference or perception, though these two do aid us by revealing the sameness of the organic structure, but by *upamāna* (which literally means near-measure, measure taken when standing very closely).¹

A study of Nyaya-Vaisesika method of approach reveals that despite much clear thinking it is dominated by the sense-order. Sensation dominates

¹ "Further through Upamana also this same self is pointed out in the words 'just as you perceive your own self so on the same *upamāna* please understand that I perceive the self in the same manner.' I. i. 5."—Ganganath Jha's translation. (I have kept the word *upamāna* untranslated.)

over inference or relational thinking for the reference to fact, correspondence of thoughts to things and extrinsic tests ensure the affirmation of material truth. The aim of science is exactly this. It involves many observers and the mutual verification and organisation of their experience. Secondly, perception grants an objective world but of discrete objects and with discrete sensations which require a locus or foothold or *āyatana* that can be described, in other words, as the unity of these qualities related in a definite manner. These qualities are general, found in more than one perceived object and we have come to see that these inferences of identity are not only with regard to the general nature of these qualities but also with regard to their interrelations, as distinguished from those around them. They are innumerable and enumerable. They are related externally or in eternal conjunction in some cases. Motion too is observed between these objects as well as change of state. And thus we begin to see even the relative non-existence. So almost all the *padārthas* are perceptible facts though doubtless they seem to involve inference. The six ways of knowing an object really refer to the perception of these categories in one and the same object recognized as the common object for all. *Samavāya*, inherence, is also stated to be a percept, though it is really a relation, because of the observation of going together. The only point about *samavāya* is that it affirms a belonging together which is a category of inference, even as the concept of *vyāpti* or invariable concomitance between two sets of phenomena is.

That is why we find that the *vaiśeṣika darśana* gives such a realistic, pluralistic, sensist account of reality. It realises however that the universe or reality has other factors regarding the subject of experience, oneself and other selves, which are not perception-dependent. That is the reason why it accepts inference as an appendage to perception and includes *śabda* under inference. Indeed the atomic theory, the theory of *adrṣṭa* and others are due to inference and *śabda*. Its acceptance of scriptural teaching is limited to the sphere of the supersensible and the supraconceptual dharma and Isvara. Jainism did not accept the *āgama* of the Vedic origin nor did Buddhism. Buddhists accept inference and rank it above perception and consider that thought when relieved of the perceptual limitations may be able to free us from the perpetual confusion that is perceptual experience. Jainism is nearer the scientific view, the pragmatic view of dominance of perception over reasoning.

When we come to deal with the Sankhyan view we find that Reason or inference is rendered more important as an instrument of knowledge and there is distrust too of the sense-deliverances. Reality is looked at with the aid of reason almost to the exclusion of the perceptual. Perception plays

a subordinate rôle. Not so much the person (*purusha*) but reason (*buddhi*) is important. All processes of Nature may be sensorially real but they are brought under the concept of reason or *buddhi* or intellect. It is the discrimination or rather the loss of it that produces the sensible world. Indeed sense-experience is a degradation of objective extension of the intellect. The laws of thought such as uniformity, causality, unity and oppositional interaction are dealt with in Sankhya. Substance is equated with qualities which are not quite the mere responses of sense-organs to stimuli. A new concept of quality as dynamic, as combining at once the nature of a substance and its power of effecting some process or stimulation or motion is evolved.

The individual conscient being is distinguished from Nature and the realm of spirit and consciousness are definitely distinguished from the realms of Nature or Matter. There, however, seem to be several degrees of their inter-connection. We can see the same first step in evolving intellectual systems here in India, as it was in the West, when sense was distinguished from reason and reason was considered to lead to truth whereas sense could only lead to ignorance. Undoubtedly, as Plato indeed saw, sense may be subordinated to reason in order to discover in it the reflections, however pale or attenuated of the immaculate truths or eternal forms or ideas of Reason. Buddhism and Sankhya are rational systems: but Sankhya submits reason to the deliverances of mystic teaching. It is true that Buddhism also ultimately ended in evolving a mysticism but had to pass through a period of *nirvāna*-experience, a self-naughting and world-naughting experience poised on the supreme conception of an all-embracing compassion. The world-view granted by Sankhya is a world of souls and a world of Nature. In the modern constructions of the philosophers we are indeed presented with this same pluralism of souls united by, or denizens of, a common Nature or universe, charged with the task of understanding it and through that, understanding themselves. They have now come to assume that in this dynamic process of understanding they are organic to each other and must evolve a formula of existing together in harmony. But then the souls must first become spectators of the processes of Nature in which they are organically involved through senses or perception and affection and volition. Once they begin to exercise reason and withdraw from the senses and their objects they will regain that supreme intellectual state or perfect discrimination which neither accepts nor rejects or condemns anything of Nature, and by this training begins to experience a new dimension of Nature, universal in kind and a truer pulse of Reality as subject-object. The great contribution of Sankhyan thought with which we can

compare those of the Platonic-Socratean philosophy is in the field of psychology of Nature, the subjective aspect of Nature as against the objective aspect of Nature, an aspect open to the instrument of *anumāna* inference, rather than *pratyakṣa*, which can only present the surface fact. It is this higher type of *anumāna* which is considered to be alike to intuition, inseeing or in-measuring or valuing. This is surely a new meaning of the term *anumāna*. Yet by this alone is Nature understood from within as reality. By means of this *anumāna*, purified reason, Nature is not apprehended as the Reality but only as the subject as against the object. Our inferences are even shown to be vitiated at the very start. Our perceptive defect, *akhyāti* (non-observation), is shown to be the starting point of illusion and the transmigratory and evolutionary process. This perceptive defect is not of the sensory order but of the primary intellect itself. Some thinkers find in this position echoes of the Kantian schools, but it might be said that this is a state of consciousness which is the turning-point of the subjective-objective, the crucial point when the subjective becomes projective and objective or else the point when the objective restores itself to the subjective status, as Nicolai Berdyaev intimates. The sensory knowledge that we now get is a more distinguished and emphasised one. Reverse the direction of perception from the objective to the subjective or still better or another way of stating the same fact, substitute reason in the place of sensory perception as an instrument of knowledge, discrimination will arrest the movement of sensory infinity. This is the *sādhana* of the rationalists. Sankhya and in a more radical measure Buddhism follow this course. In Greece Socrates, Plato and earlier Parmenides and in Modern philosophy Des Cartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Kant and Hegel follow this course. Evolution is sensorial, involution is rational; self is rational, nature is sensorial. Sankhya is concerned with the self, the subject, the psychological core of being. Buddhism abolishes the subject as merely the configuration of ideas and images and as the womb of all dialectical activity. But in neither do we arrive at a true metaphysic of reality which clarifies the fundamental problem of One-Many. As Plato said "Show me the man able to see both the one and the many in Nature and I will follow in his foot-steps as though he were a God".¹

We are left with an innumerable number of souls within one Nature. We arrive at the unity of Nature by means of reason but not yet the unity of the individual subjects. It is indeed in Leibniz—Nicolas of Cusa was an earlier formulator—that we have a firm foundation of spiritual monadism

¹ Quoted by MacNeille Dixon in his *Gifford Lectures: Human Situation*

which answers deeply to the need for the fundamental solution of the problem of one-many. The Reality is 'subject-object, though we find that in our experience we have to pass from the object to the subject and understand that there is a close correspondence between them, if not precisely an identity in distinction. The higher the type of consciousness the closer does the correspondence happen. Inference however universal a property of subjects, is yet individuated and cannot apprehend Reality as a single Whole. There are two reasons for this defect, (i) the constant habituation in our life (or lives) of inference to the field of Nature or understanding the laws of Nature and (ii) the priority of sensations or sense-action or reaction to the world of Nature. As already pointed out Sankhya and Buddhism seek to reverse these two habits (i) by constant habituation to inner knowing rather than to perception, in order ultimately to use reason alone as an instrument of knowing. Hence *yama* and *dhyāna*, *dhāraṇa* and *saṁādhi* are utilized as knowing instruments which lead to *saṁyama* in the place of *saṁyoga*. Supersensible knowing or para-cognition results. There is soul-sensibility of the integral universe as against the former *prākṛtic* or material sensibility of the organs to limited zones of experience. Thus when pure reason is released from the strings of perception, it achieves two things: abstractly it begins to be able to be aware of the pure forms or essences or real ideas; and concretely it manifests the supersensible way of soul-seeing and release from the limited and very conditioned existence and deliverances of sensory experience. It rises to the level of intuition, intellectual sympathy, over-mind consciousness. We owe it to Sri Aurobindo who has shown that reason has upper reaches; and Professor Radhakrishnan has, in a classic manner, emphasized this aspect of the ascension of Reason or Pure Intellect to the levels of Intuition (higher buddhi) in his exposition of this subject. It is here that we come across the third instrument of knowledge called *Upamāna*, which some systems do not recognize, whereas others have different versions of its utility or efficacy.

Supersensible objects are perceived supersensibly by the soul. *Upamāna* is used by *Nyāya* for the purpose not of analogical inference as such but for the purpose of recognition (of a kind) of an object referred to by a *vākya* or proposition. In the *Mīmāṃsā* of Jaimini school *upamāna* means the recognition that the object we see has similarity with that we have already known or seen. It is of the form of inference of the immediate type that A is like B therefore B is like A. In these two views we see that *upamāna* grants a place to the principle of recognition of the seen in the unseen or supersensible in the sensible, since both ways are legitimate. But it is clear also that most expositors have preferred the former to the latter and

thus made *upamāna* a sensist category. It is however my point to show that *Upamāna* has come to play an important rôle in the interpretation of philosophical literature. The study of *Upamānas* of the *Alankārikas* (rhetoricians) is a very helpful line of enquiry to open up a new interpretation of this instrument of knowledge. It is at the hands of the mystics and seers that *upamāna* undergoes a transformation from the poor analogical reasoning that it is considered to be and just an extension of the inferential reasoning. The celestial world of light is opened. Gods and goddesses, processes supersensible and results supersensible are fully presented in this world of experience. *Purva Mimāṃsā* darsana has to deal with this extended world of the supersensible reality, the higher part of the sensible; multiplicity of gods and functions, powers and performers, hymnists and sacrificers, within and without are the denizens of this new world to which our consciousness has access. The *Upamāna* in *Purva Mimāṃsā* and in seer poetry is strictly governed by the scriptural revelation in a sense; it gets its sanction and authentic voice from the supernatural wisdom of the seers.¹ The Mimamsist's world, though a pluralistic world of souls, is a world of souls who perceive their continuous existence with the supersensible reality arranged according to grades and planes of being and perhaps with distinct laws (*ṛtas*) and powers and informing intelligences. No doubt commentators have tried to subordinate this *Upamāna*, which is the instrument of the knowledge of the supersensible, to the *anumāna*, the strait-jacket of sensory inference or reasoning that is sense-dependent. But once we release the *Upamāna* from the apron-strings of sense and inference, we shall find that it immediately helps us to know or intuit the inner nature of Reality as correspondential, symbolic, supra-subjective, having its own unity of all grades and displaying mutual reflection which alone makes for the splendid multiple figure of speech that adorn all great language and literature. Language becomes significant, poetic in the true sense of the term, which embraces, encompasses all similars by referring to diverse planes and points of view of the celestial, terrestrial and subjective *adhidaiva*, *adhibhuta* and *adhyātma*.² Thus language becomes richer and words

¹ It is true that it may be in a sense equated with the *sāmānyatodṛṣṭa* or perception of the *sāmānya* or generality in a supersensible manner but then it is a vision of the universals like the Platonic perception of the archetypes. *Upamāna* when subordinated to sense-perception becomes the *naiyāyika* upamana of recognition of the object referred to or denoted or connoted by the *vākya* by means of the similarity of the unknown to the known.

² *Alankārikas* consider *upamāns* and *rūpakas* as useful for expressing poetic sentiment. This again is a restriction of the *upamāna* as an instrument of knowledge or rather a misuse of the same for the purpose of enjoyment or mere expression,

gain significance and *lakṣaṇa*. Concept develops or is recognized and is dissolved in higher consciousness resulting in or in being displayed in various metaphors—all of which are discerned as being appropriate and as producing *rasa*. Knowledge in *Upamāna* grants ecstasy or delight and delight or poetic sentiment indeed becomes lifted to the levels of knowledge. We move along the route to the higher realism of the supersensible. Reality however rich in this form does not gain anything more than the universal quality of organic interpenetrativeness or continuity. *Upamāna* when it is utilised, even like the Upanishad, as the instrument of knowledge, becomes the instrument of supersensible correspondence-knowledge. It reveals the *Rta*, law Divine, which is supersensible; the Chhandas is supersensible, Rishis are seers of the supersensible. Hymns too are supersensible. All these are perceived by this new instrument. How very different from the ordinary conception of Upamana this is can be seen clearly now.

Great poets always compare the persons and phenomena of the earth with the celestial and supersensible and supraconceptual phenomena. Valmiki, Vyasa, Kalidasa and others use *upamās* or *upamānas* in this manner. The *upamās* are of course of two kinds, one *svārthopomāna* that is similar to the *svārthānumāna* (subjective inference) which reveals or explains the sensible by means of the suprasensible, and the other *Parārthopamāna* similar to the *Parārthānumāna* (inference for others) which reveals or explains the suprasensible by means of the sensible. *Upamānas* grant knowledge as well as delight that is due to the discovery of the fundamental though manifold identity.¹ The *Upamānas* of Kalidasa form an interesting study. He uses all kinds which makes us feel the oneness of all things in and through their variegated diversity. The opening lines of the Raghuvamśa: "*vāgarthāvivā samprktau...*" reveals the high seriousness characteristic of great poetry. Even the Balakanda of Valmiki abounds in Upamanas which reveal the characteristic of great poetry to lie in this transference of sensory images to the supersensory and more importantly the application of the supersensory to the sensory. The characteristic of seer-poetry seems to lie not so much in its being a 'criticism of life' but in this establishment of the continuity and correspondential identity between the supersensible and the sensible, which uplifts the sensible from its inchoateness to the sense of its truth in the Infinite. So does Milton's

What if earth
be but the shadow of Heaven

¹ Upamana inculcates further the identity through *sāmānādhikarānya* of knowledge and delight or *rasa*, fulness of Being, the feeling of the Infinite,

and so Shelley's magnificent platonic

Life like a dome
Of many coloured glass
stains the white radiance of eternity.

Instances can be multiplied to show that this is the place and function of Upamana, to explain the sensible by means of the supersensible and to make the sensible truly the mirror of the Real, the finite the abode of the Infinite.

In the Vedic Hymns, the Brahmanas and the Upanisads the use of the Upamana itself betokens realities. Suggestion is utilised too in order to prove the reality *yathārtha-jñāna*. The *Yathārtha-khyāti vāda* of Nathamuni and earlier writers shows that they held the view that where there is possibility of similitude there must be some obscure or occult ground of identity, real ground Knowledge is always of the real, whether it is sensible or supersensible that is all that has to be discriminated.

Thus we go beyond the supersensory cognition of Upamana which is the field of supersensory intuition into Reality in its richness and transcendent universality. Yet this is necessary to go beyond. Thought itself must reveal its real concrete power and delight and total light. This is attained at the level of Shabda or Sruti, the revelational thought that includes the revelational sense. The higher patterns of Reality are yet poured through supermental knowledge which reveals itself to all seers or seer-like consciousness as the One fundamental Truth of all realities and which also explains the movement and reflection of all lower grades of the knowledge and the 'ignorance'.

This knowledge it is that is of the Divine in which all are, in all of which He indwells, and from whom are or who has Himself become all these. This seems to be the aim of knowledge—to understand the full and integral nature of Reality of which all the lower orders are partial reflections or representations or snatches or ragged excerpts for understanding which there are several ways or instruments of knowledge. All of them are necessary. That is why the term '*ānvīkṣikī*' does not merely mean logical philosophy but also metaphysics of the Self or *Ātmā* even as Manu held it to be in the earliest times¹ (Manu. VII.43). At any rate we know that when *ānvīkṣikī* was used as subordinate to the intuitions of the supermental or the Infinite Self it fulfilled its purpose of metaphysics, but when

¹ cf. *History of Indian Logic*, pp. 4 and 6 where the author holds that *anvikṣikī* was identical with *darsana* or seeing whole, and the meaning given to it subsequently as *hetu-śāstra* or science of reasoning is a later adaptation.

it was later also utilized for the purpose of understanding the interrelations between the perceived which belong to the same order or as near those principles of the finite, it fell from its high purpose.

It would be apt if I quoted here the words of one of our most eminent living philosophers who states the problem of our knowledge in this manner: There is a fourfold order of knowledge, first 'the original and fundamental way of knowing native to the occult self in things is a knowledge by identity; second is the derivative knowledge by direct contact associated at its roots with a secret knowledge by identity or starting from it, but actually separated from its source and therefore powerful but incomplete in its cognition; the third is a knowledge by separation from the object of observation but still with a direct contact as its support or even a partial identity; the fourth is a completely separative knowledge which relies on a machinery of indirect contact, a knowledge by acquisition which is yet, without being conscious of it, a rendering or bringing up of the contents of a pre-existent inner awareness and knowledge. A knowledge by identity, a knowledge by intimate direct contact, a knowledge by separative direct contact, a wholly separative knowledge by indirect contact are the four cognitive methods of Nature.'¹ *Sākṣātkāra* or *śabda*, *Upamāna* in its higher meaning as I have expounded here in this paper, *anumāna* and *pratyakṣa* are what are clearly discernible in the above classification by Sri Aurobindo.

The logic of the Infinite begins where the logic of the finite ends. The logic of the Infinite involves the understanding of the totality which is not capable of being equated with the sum of finites or the many. Sri Aurobindo points out that the infinite is not an opposite of the finites understood as the many, nor contradictory to them. The finite is a veiled or concealed or condensed Infinite even as Matter is the concealed Spirit. The negation that we perceive between the finite and the infinite is a phenomenal description; it is but the expression of the concealed nature or veiled form of the Infinite. It is because the finite is, that it can and indeed does 'suggest' the Infinite. To the poetic vision the suggestion (*dhvani*) is conveyed by means of similitude, correspondence, organically or functionally or structurally. Thus it is the 'potency' or latency of the Infinite that is suggested by the term 'finite' not the negation or absence or impossibility of the Infinite within it. In reality the finite conforms to the laws of the Infinite essentially. Once we are awakened to the depths of the finite, once we enter into the heart of the finite, then we can discern 'supersensorially' the presence and pulsation of the Infinite. The finite then becomes to the poetic consciousness (*kavi*)

¹ The Life Divine, Vol. II, pp. 349-50

an expression of the supreme condensation or concentration of the Infinite Being. It is this awakened vision in its first movement that is called the *upamāna*-consciousness, "the derivative knowledge by direct contact associated with a secret knowledge by identity or starting from it"; the first phase of the reversed consciousness that has begun to seize upon the Infinite within the individual, an act that is performed by apprehending the converse relation that Reality bears to the phenomenal. It is by means of this consciousness that has exceeded or broken through the Ignorance that the individual 'supersenses' and conceives or rather the individual, the finite is supersensed and conceived in and through the Universal. The language of such a consciousness is symbology, myth and paradox, even as G. K. Chesterton affirmed. Nicolas Berdyaev stated, "The living God and the drama of divine life only exist for the symbolic and mythological consciousness."¹ This is the correspondential realism present in the Itihasas and the Vedas. By a mystery of cognition the finite even ceases to remain anything but as a symbol and abode of the the Infinite or indeed by identification it becomes the Infinite. For a consciousness of this dimension and nearness to reality, in the words of Sri Aurobindo, "Time there is more than Einsteinian in its relativity, the creative imagination is its sole disposer and arranger; fantasy reigns sovereign...myth, romance, and realism make up a single whole."² The *upamāna*-consciousness is creative imagination which functions in a threefold manner, as the Naiyayika recognition, Mimamsika supersensible recollection (or platonic reminiscence) and Alankarika *dhvani* or suggestion, and bears above all the stamp of authenticity. From this *upamāna* consciousness it is but a near step to the fourth and ultimate way of knowledge by identity—the *śabda* or Vedic supra-conceptual knowledge secreted within the heart of each individual.

We are all aware of the theory of Bertrand Russell about the distinction between knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description. In the first term of the above distinction drawn by Russell we have a suggestion of an intimacy of knowing, something that is affective or aesthetic as well as sensorial cognition. But it could be clearly seen that the same is a mere variant of Bergson's intellectual sympathy or N. Lossky's intuition. Both of the categories mentioned above by Russel fall within the third and fourth types in Sri Aurobindo's exposition of the doctrine of the Pramanas, according to Indian Philosophy. Identity-theories, though speaking in terms of knowledge by identity, yet fix their identity in the general concepts or

¹ "Freedom and Spirit," p. 190

² "Collected Poems and Plays," Vol I. p. 173. Introduction to 'Perseus the Deliverer.'

ideas rather than in the spiritual or occult knowledge of the Self which is more than the private self or ego. Indeed if clearly conceived theirs is a theory of knowledge *of* identity (contèntial) rather than *by* identity (as process). But then this distinction is not usually accepted or discerned.

I am convinced that there is a profound truth in the dictum that every unsolved problem or problem which has been debunked or avoided will return to us for solution. Reality cannot be avoided or escaped from, not any portion of it will permit us to avoid it for ever. There is the urgent need for taking all the ways of knowing recommended to us by mystics, poet-seers, rationalisers and observers or scientists so that we may be enabled to arrive at the full knowledge of a metaphysics that shall not be a partial representation or a mechanical structure or an abstract configuration of the Real or even a delightful Expanse of aesthesis. It is bound to be organistic, displaying interdependence between the multiplicity, and concrete to each individual in its universal measure. That is the reason why we have to pass from the atomic and the partial and the fragmentary understanding of reality to the total conception of it. It cannot be said that the total reality is an absolute and infinite that cannot in any rational or understandable manner be described to us. The very fact that we strive to represent it is an evidence of that possibility. We have to pass to the logic of the Infinite which can justifiably be able to explain the rationale of the finite which refuses to remain finite, a refusal which is represented to us by the forms of evolution or development of our thought from the sub-perceptual through the perceptual or sensory to the rational or relational and to the intuitive or para-or supra-rational to the meta-cognitive which does not dismiss the lower but assimilates them and grants them a firmer ground or being in the totality apprehended as Reality. And not only that—it is apprehended as the most valuable or the Ultimate Good and the Beautiful or Sachchidananda which belongs to the Self, the most real and concrete Universal which is the unity of the many and their ground. Obviously it would mean that this sachchidananda Self is the most complete Personality—a *unitas multiplex* whose reality is manifested in and through the Process or History which is meaningful process.

The above is a sketch of the reconstruction of logical thought according to the logic of the Infinite and according to the organistic conception which grants the primacy to the mystic understanding, which accepts the dynamic unity of all experiences whilst not dissolving or dismissing any of them. This attempt is worthwhile since we have so long sought to view the Absolute from the standpoint of the finite individual and failed to arrive at the solution of the problem of the Infinite and the Self, and of the status of the

ultimate values. It is only when we understand that the Infinite and Self is the abode of the ultimate values and is in fact the Ultimate Value that we can understand the truth of the ancient seers that Brahman is the *parama-puruṣārtha*. We have a method of knowing the Infinite, too. As Professor Macneile Dixon has with great attractiveness and lucidity pointed out, the solutions granted by the poetic consciousness and seer-vision, which we have noted as equivalent to the *upamāna* in our exposition of the *pramāṇa-śāstra* today, have rendered possible certain definite scope for further thinking. They alone body forth the Reality to the individual and reveal to him the unique status of himself and the supreme privilege of participation in the Life Divine, the Brahman—the Organism. Not merely the content of the experiences of the mystics and Rishis or seer-poets but also the manner of their reception has a large part to play in the reconstruction of the Logic of the Infinite.

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Notes on Poetic Inspiration

(A PERSONAL DOCUMENT)

BY K. D. SETHNA

BY Sri Aurobindo's gracious influence I am enabled now and then to write poetry which meets with the approval of the arch-critic in him. People sometimes ask me: "How do you get poetic inspiration?" Inspiration comes to me in the form of a sudden spark or flame-seed falling into the consciousness. A kind of shock is felt and I know that the soul is pregnant with a poem. The poem may follow after a brief interval or there may be a long period of gestation, but I am absolutely certain of its growth in the subliminal as soon as that subtle shock is experienced. For instance, "Pointers", beginning—

Everything points now
Somewhere, somewhere,
Silverly straining
Through the dusk air—

was the result of my gazing out at the sky through a window one evening. Something unexpectedly touched me from the faint atmosphere, and two ideas sprang up at the same time—"softness" and "piercing through". But I was unable yet to discover definitely what import they might bear. I fumbled a little while, when looking out through another window I spied a long cloud like a white finger through the thin dusk. A sense of completeness in the inner impregnation came to me, and the first draft of the poem was the almost immediate result.

At other times the impulse or rather the impact is got less directly from Nature or life than from books. Thus I came across the French words: "*O divine adorable Mère!*" They arrested me by their combination of sublimity and sweetness. Very much moved, I tried to become more consciously aware of the feeling—to visualise concretely its implications. I remembered my frequent experience at the feet of the Mother—as if some ecstasy were trickling luminously into the heart; so the line at once occurred to me: "And the still heart drinks heaven drop by drop." It is the last line of the poem composed: the rest was a matter of discerning the whole.

sequence of mental and emotional gestures consummated in that final soul-act.

Often a simile or metaphor or imaginative phrase in some author strikes the mind and becomes a part of one's own peculiar vision, gathering around the skeletonic symmetry, as it were, borrowed from that author a living flesh of significance quite original and individual to oneself. Several of my poems are born in this way and the debt I owe most for such inspiration is, among English writers, to Francis Thompson. It is a kind of plagiarism which is often practised by poets, even by very great ones, and most legitimately too so long as one either improves the matter adopted or clothes it in a novel hue and harmony. Virgil's quarrying from Homer is well-known, so also are Chaucer's beautiful imitation of the Italians and Milton's recutting the gems he discovered in the splendour of the Classics. Wordsworth's finely intonated

Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn

is undoubtedly a reminiscence of Spenser's

Triton blowing loud his wreathèd horne;

while Keats's

... Magic casements opening on the foam
Of perilous seas in faery lands forlorn

is a superb transfiguration of Wordsworth's idea about his "lady of the lake":

Sole-sitting by the shores of old Romance.

A certain similarity of language or imagery between one poet and another is an extremely interesting starting-point for a revealing study of their psychological uniquenesses as evinced by the different applications they make of analogous phrases or figures.

Once the glow of inspiration is somehow caught, there is no telling the manner in which a poem may develop. My poems commence almost anywhere; that is, I do not begin at the beginning and reach gradually the close. Stanzas spurt up haphazard: usually I have the ending first and then perhaps the opening or part of the middle. I find myself mostly on the

peak of the poetic experience to be embodied and then work down in the reverse way. The whole inspiration is summed up in an intense cumulative moment and afterwards set forth in its broad manifold bearings—a phenomenon perhaps akin to what Mozart meant by saying that he heard his musical pieces not in a succession of notes but all at once as one whole and later arranged them out. This arranging out, or setting forth is also done, frequently, by fits and starts, and the first draft of a poem is bound to show lacunae, gaps not only of epithets or substantives or verbs but also of entire lines and even complete stanzas. The missing links I for one try to supply by raising myself to a tenseness of expressive effort in which I keep humming what precedes and follows the absent words or lines so as to kindle or conjure up the connection between them; or I gather myself into deep silence and cast a hook, as it were, into the inner spiritual being and wait for the necessary words or lines to get caught and give a pull which immediately enlightens my consciousness with their essential form and substance.

* * *

I believe that this fragmentary method of inspiration is due to insufficient liaison between the outer transmitting mind and the elemental poetic enthousiasmos. It is not correct to say that "born" poets encounter no difficulties; there is indeed a supreme class of poets who could never have done the prodigious amount of fine work which stands to their credit, if they had not been gifted with an almost supernatural spontaneity of perfect utterance, but otherwise facility is a dangerous delight. A powerful facility prevented Victor Hugo from seeing that often when he was thrilled by some profound emotion he did not take care to plumb it adequately but just took the surface suggestion and, led on by his mastery over language, manufactured rhetoric instead of poetry. He rose grandly in verbal excitement but without having plunged deep enough in thought and emotion: so there remained even in the midst of his most grandiose flights a not infrequent ring of insincerity: he sounded like a prophet, but a prophet who had not himself lived up to his own message. One was astonished at his eloquence, but not taken absolute prisoner—sense and soul laid under a spell—as one is again and again by the speeches in Shakespeare. Shelley was a "born" poet, so much so that, after Shakespeare and Milton, nobody has been productive to such an extent and with such a sustained poetic quality as he, yet it was not because of his facility only that he could be a channel of almost continual inspiration. It was his inspiration that made his facility bear fruit—he wrote easily enough

when he fell in love with Harriet Westbrook but no poet of his young age wrote more wretchedly. Nothing before "Alastor" is of any value: one has only to read his ludicrous juvenilia to wonder how so weak and unoriginal a versifier could almost at a leap become a feeder on honey-dew and a drinker of paradisal milk. The fact was that in some way a connection got established between the outer and the inner, the man and the Muse that was the soul of his soul.

How unspeakably important it is for the man who feels the seed of song in him to get the sun and rain that shall awake its giant potentialities may be realised from the instances we know of men possessing wonderful talents yet balked of that ability to take one step forward which constitutes the *salto mortale* between verse and poetry. A mind like Pope could have put to magnificent use the neatness, clarity, point and speed of his versification if only the true spirit had possessed him. As it was, he wrote rarely anything comparable to those four lines of his which show what we have lost because his talents never caught fire—lines which by their solitary excellence epitomise in what they say the tragedy of the man who wrote them:

Most souls, 'tis true, but peep out once an age,
Dull sullen prisoners in the body's cage:
Dim lamps of life, that burn a length of years
Useless, unseen as lamps in sepulchres.

Speaking about myself, I fear I would have been nearly a lamp in a sepulchre—in spite of my having indulged the itch for poetic composition for a length of years—without the liberating touch of Sri Aurobindo. Ever since boyhood the pen has been to me the *ultima thule* of all pleasure and the poetic output of my early teens was prolific but blissfully innocent of the true poetic glow, except perhaps in a chance phrase here and there, and my first notions about metre were most laughably original: I actually used to imagine that if one packed two or more lines, by means of close or spaced, small or large writing, into equal lengths across the page they became metrically uniform! Later I learned to scan and developed a pseudo-Byronic style which gradually grew more individual, yet something of Byron's temperament remained and, in conjunction with an incisive intellectuality, love of the *recherché* and a passionate complex decadent desire for sense-experience, led me to my first true self-expression in poetry. I say "true" not meaning aesthetically valuable but as showing the promise of something such to come: there was an evolving consciousness of rhythm, image-beauty, structure. However, apart even from technical defects, one element seems at present to me to

have definitely flawed much of that early production—an element which has been admired by “modernistic” minds of my own milieu, with the result that the book I published then and half regret now is still discussed and praised for its vital frenzy and perverse intellectual zest. Luckily it was under the nom-de-plume of Maddalo, the name given by Shelley to Byron and hinting in my hands at a kind of Shelleyan idealism gone Byronically topsy-turvy in which Byron’s healthy vulgarity became sicklied o’er with the pale cast of a *goût d’infini* lost in a world of sensations—a fever of the soul, so to speak, striving after a grotesque perfection—idealism expending its power in a twisted intensity of physical passion. No doubt there were a few fine efflorescences in the midst of this strange psycho-analytic mysticism and towards the end of the phase illustrated by the book a catharsis of the sensations was perceptible, an opening of the genuine emotional being, less pathological, less modernistic, more directly inclined towards the spiritual depths. And, though now something verging on sentimentality threatened to use the intellectual energy to shape variously another ingenious idea-pattern of image and word-colour, there was some true liberation into the pure accent of poetry. Still, I cannot be said to have really come into my own, the reason being that my centre of most individual inspiration was not, as I had imagined, in the mind or in the passionate nature, but in something beyond them—an *amor Dei* not merely intellectual or inclined to see in a rosy haze the common feelings and bodily excitements, but aching for the Spiritual, the Eternal, in its unadulterated form, a straight *nisus* towards deity. The trouble, however, for those whose poetic inspiration must be drawn from beyond the normal mind in order to be perfect and who yet have too active and ingenious an intellect is that, until the latter is fully illumined with the Spirit’s smiling certainties, the inspiration is likely to come in fitful rushes and a lot of shaping has to be done, conscious artistry to be practised—not to cover up and conceal the gaps but patiently to draw out, from within, that part of the poetry which has got suspended somewhere in the subliminal instead of coming through like the rest. A strong faculty of self-criticism has to be acquired, a Flaubertian sense of the only word and the unique cadence, lest the pondering consciousness should too easily content itself with rhetoric and ornament in lieu of the inevitable expression. Once acquired, this faculty is a veritable *oestrus* and the poor poet goes sometimes fretting for days before he sleeps the sleep of the just, the man who has done justice to the divine discontent in him. Dorothy Wordsworth records how William once wore his nerves to shreds trying to find a new revealing epithet for the cuckoo. I can quite understand William’s scrupulousness—would he had never

learned to wear his readers' nerves to shreds as he did in later life by finding a country parson's tongue in trees and Sunday School sermons in stones! I myself have spent a whole fortnight on tenterhooks for the sake of one noun¹ and had to wait for over a year before a certain inspired line brought down in a sudden stream its complete context of an eighteen-lined poem.² One does not, however, regret these poetic pains: I can never sufficiently thank Sri Aurobindo for his yogic power that put me in touch with the inspiration my real temperament was fumbling towards through blind alleys, but, next to the faultless prolificity for which I aspire, there is nothing I could value more than his critically opening in me an eye to sift in my work the gold from the tinsel glitter that might accompany it, together with his gift to me of a ear that can occasionally catch the "sweet everlasting Voices."



There are, of course, many poems the whole of which are bull's eyes scored at one shot: some of Shelley's have that look and Shakespeare in his best passages must have laid line after mighty line without needing to halt anywhere or amend anything: has he not the reputation of having never blotted a single word? If he really wrote "Macbeth" in this fashion, that play is surely the most amazing miracle of the human mind, for, excepting perhaps a couple of short scenes at the very start, it is one unbroken rush of imaginative grandeur. "Lear", that other peak of his genius, has an intenser dramatic quality in parts and is vaster in its sweep of occult elemental vision, but the progress of its poetry is not so consistently high as here: if not valleys, it has marked lesser and greater eminences, while the mountain that is "Macbeth" uplifts, gigantically, an almost straight sky-line. But even Shakespeare is now and then liable to slips which make us wish he had done a little "blotting". Take the lines (from "Hamlet"):

... When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin? who would fardels bear...

One doubts if the concluding "bear" is an embellishment, almost repeating as it does the sound of the bodkin's epithet; it may not be easy to substitute this quasi-homophone, but Shakespeare ought to have spurred his

¹ "Alchemy" in line 14 of "Sky-rims"

² "Pool of Lonelinesses"

super-Pegasus to carry him over the difficulty. Often the impetuosity of a poem or its dazzling richness covers up such peccadilloes, and in blank verse, where the technique is a special one and factors like assonance and consonance have got to help the reader forget the absence of end-rhymes, one cannot as legitimately pick fault with regard to these points as in rhymed poetry, but even there it is possible to overstep the limit. Where rhyme is already playing its part, force and fluency and fertility of imagination become unquestionably more chaste and quintessential in their functions if they are not strained to render little flaws less prominent. All the same, it must be added that one can easily fly from the eddies of irresponsible inspiration to the hard and dry rocks of hyper-critical technique, failing to see the effective use possible in some places of what would be defective in others. Thus, a sound (particularly if stressed) in a line, echoed noticeably by another coming rather close in the next, may be open to objection, as in

Lo then my love—a single-aimed *fearless* dart!
 Shall it not *pierce* lone-leaping through the void
 The dim indifference of Thy God-heart?

I would regard it as a positive improvement to replace “fearless” by “flinchless”; but when an undeniably poetic suggestion is secured, all theoretical qualms must be thrown to the winds—a suggestion as in the line,

Burns with a benison the *murk* of time,

where a word like “dark” instead of “murk” would weaken the competent “murk”-combating power the similar sound gives to “burns”, while “gloom” would render the rhythm at the close too congestedly labial and sticky: one would have to press the lips together and pause, twice without any perceptible interval. Swinburne would have preferred “murk” simply on the ground that it interwove an extra echo-effect with the general rhyme-scheme of the stanza from which the line is taken, and he would have considered the substitution of “fearless” by “flinchless” a serious blunder. Perhaps “fearless” too can be defended, though not as so inevitable a word as “murk”; but to concede without demur the utter rightness of Swinburne’s tendency towards extra effects, assonantal, alliterative or rhymal, would be to forget that, even with a great metrist and musician in verse like him, there were occasions when these devices struck an artificial note which his rapid complicated lyricism could not excuse.

I do not share the present day cult for the frigidly terse, the roughly deliberate, which inveighs against Swinburne's so-called effusiveness, verbal and rhythmic. Keats, too, would seem pompous, romantic, colourfully emotional, and thus open to the charge of effusiveness in the eyes of the extremists of cold and dry light in poetry. My criticism of Swinburne is directed only at his failure sometimes to practise the art which naturalises art and not at his penchant for harmonic recurrences or rich proliferations of word and idea and sentiment. There is in him a rhythmic ecstasy which is of the fundamental essence of poetic expression: without that breath of exaltation no poetry is possible and on the wings of it "Atalanta in Calydon" and "Tristram of Lyonesse" reach a sheer glory of inspiration nowhere else to be found in Victorian times. Tennyson's art and music are a pale finicky dandyism compared to this masterful exuberance: the older poet surpassed Swinburne in sense of character and in narrative skill, but in the true *furor poeticus* the younger was with the very few masters of English verse, while Tennyson never fulfilled on a grand scale that subtle yet pungent quality his genius possessed by which he could interpret languid and intricate distempers of the heart against a changing detailed background of sympathetic landscape-colour. This quality he himself was not completely conscious of: else he would not have smothered it under a suave or sentimental superficiality. Anyway, the supreme accent is not often his—such as many pages of "Tristram of Lyonesse" reveal; much less can we hope for it in the anti-Swinburne school that makes a fetish of neglecting the high enchantment their *bête noir* seldom lacked. Of course, Swinburne's style is not the sole possible medium for such enchantment: no poet could be more concise, more clear-cut than Dante, but there is also a richness in his restraint, he is a fire on the leash. Whether controlled or expansive, it is a rhythmic intensity of vision that constitutes great verse, a thrilled mating of sense and sound within an austere beautiful or an ample and luxurious bed of metrical rhythm. Swinburne was mostly for ampleness and luxury—not in the least a fault by itself: when he failed it was not because of his style or temperament but because there happened in him pretty often a curious division between the music and the matter of his inspiration. The former, except when the art remained somehow insufficiently concealed or naturalised, left him very rarely: almost always his song was a bright flux and reflux, "a foam that the sea-winds fret", as he himself put it, but he did not invariably take care that "the thought at its heart should be deep as the sea."

What happens in the case of many modern poets is nearly the opposite: they have the stuff of poetic experience and even a certain power of language,

but the sound and the rhythm that uplift everything, the charm or the nobility of mental and emotional stress in language—these are absent. Instead we perceive either a flat colloquialism or a self-conscious cleverness, the latter defect perhaps more fatally prominent. Even when they are not openly cutting intellectual capers, they seek after a flaring abnormality of form and phrase in order to prove their virtuosity. It is not true that their utterances lack depth; only, the tendency nowadays is to say deep things in a clever way, which can be done in prose provided the writer keeps within due measure, whereas the function of poetry is, if we may hazard an antithesis, to say clever things in a profound way. Poetry aspires to give the talent or genius for getting striking images a noble thought-value, a fine emotional tone, instead of letting it succumb to the temptation of scintillating itself away in mere epigram. Analyse true poetry wherever you find it and you will immediately notice how clever the similes and metaphors are. Take Wordsworth's

It is a beauteous evening calm and free,
The holy time is quiet as a nun
Breathless with adoration.

Is it not ingenious of the poet to link up the idea of a nun to that of the departing day? Yet, we are not struck only by the novelty of it: a hush full of rapture falls on us and the tense emotion with which the link is rhythmically forged in his mind goes straight to some inner centre of vision in ourselves. Give a modern poet the same clue and instead of converting the surface brilliance of the analogy into a profound luminosity which has a touch of something ineffable he will perhaps perpetrate a stroke of unexpected *double entendre* and at least mutilate the noble theme even if in spite of his modern predilections he is still a true poet. I can more or less conceive what some Ezra Pound gifted with no negligible force and subtlety would do. Most probably he would resort to a pyrotechnic display of cross-light imagery in treating the fast-fading sacred atmosphere of Wordsworth's sunset:

The evening's red tranquillity
Is like a short but beautiful nun
Whose silent thoughts are haunted by
The bleeding Son!

These hypothetical lines have at least some rhythm and completeness, unlike the fantastic free verse and violent excess of word-vision several contemporary

poets are practising—rather poetasters, for Yeats and A. E. and, at their best, Abercrombie and Masefield are in the great tradition of English poetry. But the lines are spoiled none the less by their too patent intellectuality and striving after flamboyant effect.



In modern poetry, much that is neither frigid nor hectic, that avoids conceit and mental acrobacy no less than being prosaic and undistinguished, is yet outside the pale of inspired rhythmic speech because the modern critical conscience is too easily satisfied. A writer full of promise begins to relax his artist-sinews when he is not asked uncompromisingly for the best and nothing save the best within his power. One remembers how a chorus of unreserved praise crowned Gordon Bottomley as the most astonishing creator of the poetic drama since the seventeenth century. Poor Stephen Phillips with his "Paolo and Francesca" and "Herod" seemed quite forgotten; but that did not matter, for it is the nature of enthusiasm to forget rivals and, even if the critics had wanted to be just, Phillips would not have occurred to them, so completely has the "ripple of oblivion" gone over his brief incandescence. The important question was: Did Gordon Bottomley deserve the laurels of a true dramatic poet? Without doubt, he displayed the instinct of a dramatist: he could create revealing situations and throw into vivid relief the phantoms of his mind. In that sense he was "poetic" enough—"poet" meaning in Greek a maker of forms; but there is form of dramatic situation and there is form of character and there is form of imaginative word-music. Balzac shares with Shakespeare the vastest power known to Europe of living characterisation and is his superior in plot-weaving: a regular world criss-crossed by remarkable incidents and tense with vital genius he projects out of his multifarious being. But has he Shakespeare's word-music, Shakespeare's miraculous rhythm of metaphorical thought? He fashions here and there a striking sentence like "*La gloire est le soleil des morts*", but that is all: he does not teem with unforgettable phrase or rhythm. It is true that his medium was different, but Victor Hugo too was a creator in prose, though not so intense in emanation of character as Balzac, and even in prose he had what Shakespeare had in poetry, though naturally there not to such a heart-disturbing degree as Shakespeare—the gift of imaginative music. Passages in his novels, therefore, approximate often to great poetry, while Balzac for all his giant capacity of dramatic fiction is not seldom the despair of both the artist's and the grammarian's ear. What Hugo lacked here also was enough depth and sincerity—a lack which

flawed his poetic vision just as want of word-music left Balzac's creative gusto incomplete. In the case of Gordon Bottomley, there is sufficient creativeness of event and personal nature, and no false "high-faluting" alienates the reader's sympathy. He is sincere and restrained, never unduly raising his tone nor straining after rhetorical flourishes, and his language can be suggestive; but in his caution against rhetoric he clings too much to the conversational rhythm and the merely adequate pitch of language. Verbal surprise and rhythmical spontaneity are not constant in his verse: no lightening leaps out from his lines, no celestial thunder rolls through them, with that fine frequency so needful in poetry, in especial when rhyme is absent. Leaving aside prosodical freaks with which he intersperses his plays, such as the almost unscannable

Like an after-thought that deceives nobody,

his average movement and idiom are weak and their weakness is rendered more glaring, as Enid Hamer points out, by sudden bursts of poetic adjectives:

I know not why it is I must be fighting,
For ever fighting, when the slaying of men
Is a more weary and aimless thing to me
Than most men think it...and most women too.
There is a woman here who grieves she loves me,
And she too must be fighting me for ever
With her dim ravenous unsated mind.

This is from "King Lear's Wife"; possibly the tone is meant to anticipate that of the "foolish fond old man" in Shakespeare, though Lear mad seems to have been inspired, and, when sober, just puerile. But even in Bottomley's best play, "Gruach", which is conceived as a prelude to "Macbeth", showing what kind of a girl Lady Macbeth must have been when she first met her husband, and is admirable for its dramatic structure, live characterisation, thrilled atmosphere of forces seen and unseen—even "Gruach" is not a perfect success as *poetic* drama. The author is surely a poet: that is revealed in a score of instances—single lines, couplets or quatrains: but in between these oases lie considerable deserts not exactly of dull thought, false feeling, inadequate phraseology or technical gaucherie but of rhythmical commonplace and imaginative feebleness. There is a certain haunting presence of imagination throughout the play but it does not focus itself

as much as it should nor where foci are formed does it tingle and glow with the necessary intensity, so as to give again and again either a wide-winged eagle-sweep or a light lark-soar of enchantment. Of really marked poetic style—that is, a clean spurt of originality in sound and significance—only three or four moments occur besides the one striking passage sustained on a level where for the first time the poet in Gordon Bottomley may be considered to achieve something of a Shakespearean sovereignty of expression. Gruach, going to the hearth and gathering a handful of wood-ashes, pronounces a curse on the house and the family in which she has been immured:

It shall go down, or like a broken tree
Whiten and crumble to a hollow bone;
The moon shall soften it to a cowering dread,
And shapeless noises shall inhabit it.

(She moves slowly from the hearth to the
great door, scattering the ash with a sower's
motion as she goes)

I sow and I sow the chaff of the seed of fire:
The waving barren harvest of wilding flame
Shall here spring up, nourished by stormy air.
Come ruin, ruin and grief upon this old
Dwelling of sorrow and my captivity.
My mother died of grief; it is not ill
Her hard unfaithful race should die of grief.
Come, ruin, down upon this greedy life,
Destruction and unseating of the mind;
Woe, be embodied to their unclosing eyes
While brackish tears run down and lodge in their lips,
And all they have flies up in flakes of flame,
To fall as now these ashes.

That is marvellous; and if "Gruach" had more of this level, it would be a unique performance. Seeing it one might have thought Gordon Bottomley would do what, despite several astounding fragments, Beddoes, the only other poet who entered the Elizabethan lists with some real hope of success, failed in because of temperamental defects. Great poetic drama consists not only in an exciting accuracy of plot, in a delicate or powerful

portrayal of personality, in subtle or sublime action: it has something in the language superadded to all these—a kind of profound exuberance which is no otiose decoration but a rich overflowing as if the words were made to grow wider and deeper than their own logical connotations and to carry in their combined music a rapturous heat or a vibrating splendour their separate sounds or any other combination could never give. Judged by that standard, "Gruach" is what a great artist in the making would produce, showing a very developed dramatist but not yet a full-fledged poet. It is a pity Gordon Bottomley did not cultivate a conscious artistry keen enough to make it a prelude to some "Macbeth" from his own pen!

* * *

A conscious artistry careful of every sound and syllable, loading each rift with ore according to Keats's famous advice, is, however, fruitful only when the self-critical mind succeeds in drawing down a new corrective inspiration where the old creative inspiration has left hiatuses. Otherwise a sort of ornate or eloquent labour or else a false simplicity must result—in any case, artifice instead of art. But even inspired verbal technique is just one side of poem-building: though it is true that the highest poetry demands the smallest detail to be a gem, a collection of gems cannot sparkle into a perfect poem. Besides the necessity of fusing idea and emotion in beautifully precise and moving words, there is another desideratum: each poem under composition must be sensitive to that quality so notable in Greek literature of being felt as a whole. Of course a general plan is indispensable, and a satisfying conclusion, too, by way of climax pregnant with a significant resolution of the mood or a clear winding-up as though the energy naturally came to rest, unburdened of all its intention. But a certain selective control also has to be practised, by which the work throughout its varicoloured play preserves its essential tone and temper, its basic unity of idea, its original emotive vibration. This control must be ruthless if it is to shape a poem in the proper image of the archetype that from behind the external consciousness, either directly or in response to life's stimulus, presses for manifestation. Not merely the rough and the insipid have to be ruled out: the charming and the effective must also be sacrificed if they do not agree with the peculiar substance and style of a poem: else the creation, no matter how delightful, how august in general, remains yet faulty to the instinct which considers the scheme with an analytic view at the same time that it appreciates the total impression. And when the poem is long and

complex in its psychological chiaroscuro so that it is a masterly blending of many mood-phases, each well-nigh a little poem by itself, the same scrupulousness needs to be applied on a large scale: that is to say, not simply the ensemble but every mood-phase must be executed with the same attentive gradation of shades, not one scene should lack its individual perfection as well as its vital propriety in the full plan. Usually a laxity vitiates either the parts or the whole; there is much vividness and skill of detail without a taut constructive technique or the work is done with an eye to cumulative effect at the expense of the minutiae. And it must be repeated that constant poetic value is not sufficient: both in the harmonisation of the masses and in the disposition of qualities within each mass the poet must be coupled with the artist. For example, the first book of Keats's "Hyperion" as it was originally prepared was magnificent in its total impression, but there was a curious flaw in the picture with which it opened though every line was admirable. Thus, no poet would be ashamed to have written

No stir of air was there,
Not so much life as a young vulture's wing
Would spread upon a field of green-ear'd corn,

so clever and delicately suggestive of its meaning was the indirect allusive turn Keats had given to the language in order to keep the manner of the whole passage consistent. Yet in the passage itself the two complete lines from the above seem out of place:

Deep in the shady sadness of a vale
Far sunken from the healthy breath of morn,
Far from the fiery noon, and eve's one star,
Sat gray-hair'd Saturn, quiet as a stone,
Still as the silence round about his lair;
Forest on forest hung above his head
Like cloud on cloud. No stir of air was there,
Not so much life as a young vulture's wing
Would spread upon a field of green-ear'd corn,
But where the dead leaf fell, there did it rest.
A stream went noiseless by, still deadened more
By reason of his fallen divinity
Spreading a shade: the Naiad 'mid her reeds
Press'd her cold finger closer to her lips.

The manner and the music are of a piece, an identical type of imaginative method is at work; what is wrong with the lines,

Not so much life as a young vulture's wing
Would spread upon a field of green-ear'd corn,

is the sudden change of sight-suggestion by means of that subtle method, the incongruity of shape, colour, association—as though some touch of Titian's rich gaiety crept into a sombre strangeness *à la* Rembrandt. Figures from a "brave new world" have brought their hues into the mournful mystery and quiet round an old order declining to its grave. What has a young vulture, in the eager force and novelty of its flight through un-obstructed space, got to do with the dense sunken shadows framing Saturn's fallen divinity; or the enlivening fresh gleam of an abundant harvest, with the primeval foliage that broods over him and his surrounding of chill silence? How can the atmosphere, however tranquil, of a landscape where those natural and bright and vivid entities flourish merge in the grey motionless unfamiliarity evoked by Keats in all the other lines? There is no poetic failure, only a failure in consistency, a lapse of the dominant motive; and Keats, artist to the marrow, was troubled by the discrepancy. So, before sending his manuscript to the press, he tried to improve the lines: the young vulture he spirited away, also the glaring colour and life introduced by the green-eared corn, and re-wrote:

Not so much life as on a summer's day
Robs not at all the dandelion's fleece.

The first line fitted in flawlessly, the word "summer" suggesting calm and, though implicative of sun, general enough in its explicit purely seasonal significance not to contrast with Saturn's forest-world in which, even if summer's sun were shining somewhere, the heat and light could be checked by the thick overgrowth. The second still struck a dissonant chord: the dandelion whose gay sound too was a little out of tune in that context was primarily objectionable because its dazzling yellow was again an intrusion from a blithe colourful scene foreign to the mood. The disturbance was not so directly bright as that by an adjective like "green" added to a noun like "corn" redolent with bountiful memories, but an alien intensity was none the less mixed up, for all its indirectness, with the picture. Hence Keats, when the proof-sheets came to him, cast about

for the appropriate visual tone, and almost at the last moment found it:

Not so much life as on a summer's day
 Robs not one light seed from the feather'd grass.

A remarkable triumph of artistry!—as precise as the line deleted but without its aura. The picture grew complete, shapely, harmonious, "grass", by its neutral association and peculiar dry sound, and "feather'd", by its insistence on shape and texture, distracted the attention from the imaginable freshness or colour of the objects mentioned, saving thus the subdued spell of the passage from being broken. Keats deserves all the praise he has won from critics for these alterations, for he has thereby accomplished an entire manifestation of one of the aesthetic archetypes the conscientious pursuit of which can alone justify poetic composition.

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To allude to the two sides of poem-building as a double quest for an archetype lays one open to the charge of playing the mystagogue. But I really do not know in what other way one can faithfully represent the poetic process. That something abnormal takes place cannot be denied—call it what you will, subliminal upsurge or supraliminal downpour: the point is, the poet during the afflatus is aware of a thrilled idealistic quality in the diverse mood-modulations of that mediative force in him, polishing each detail and shaping the totality, which we call his style. But let it not be misunderstood that style is mere personal idiosyncrasy of expression or that it is primarily a question of verbal distinctness. Style here is not the man as in the Buffonian definition: it is what the man is not but aspires to be—it is that in him which attempts to transmit his intuition of a final, absolute and perfect loveliness hidden in his heart, which his normal exteriorised consciousness is not identified with but is always fascinated by, in spite of all the perversities and weaknesses to which he is subject. Style takes birth when the poet fashions his work according to his feeling of this ineffable deep down in himself, when he makes words respond to the pressure of its delight and accomplish thereby their own suggestive possibilities: it is the way in which his consciousness trembles to the touch of an utter Beauty beyond words. For, all that words do is to provide the writer with a stimulus towards establishing a more concentrated contact between his intelligence and his instinct of perfect Beauty and then to reflect that light within him. They are to him as a strange wine with which he gets intoxi-

cated and sees visions. They cast a spell on him, draw him into a waking trance in which he opens wide the gates upon some inner world of flawless archetypal dreams. Dreaming, he gives his medium the mould of his ecstasy, an impress of the manner in which he found contact with a perfection, inviolable and lovely, which smiles in secret behind the fragmentary uglinesses of surface-existence. Of course, one need not believe explicitly in a Jewish or Christian, Hindu or Mohammedan deity in order to be a great poet. One may even, like the earlier Aldous Huxley, consider God just a rich feeling in the pit of the stomach. But some such nameless feeling there always must be before we have poetry: for style, which is the process of poetry, is nothing else save the animation of language by this feeling. Hence the usual distinction of Matter and Manner is, when applied to genuine poetic literature, insufficiently clarifying in as much as by Matter is meant the idea and Manner its expression in language. Rather, Matter is the corpus of words with their infinite potentialities on which the poet works—it is his crude material, the quarry which attracts his creative impulse, the indeterminate chaos which lures him to impregnate it with the god in him. And it would be far more profound in connection with true poetic literature to speak not of Matter and Manner but Matter and Spirit. It is indeed Spirit, a transcendent Beauty perceived by the writer, that shapes a piece of poetry, though it may act on different levels in a Francis Thompson and in a Baudelaire. But its presence is unmistakable on whatever plane and in whatever personality it may shimmer through the veil of articulate sound. On a congenial level of manifestation it bursts upon us in the “majestic instancy” of a “Hound of Heaven”; it is, however, none the less present, irradiating the ordinary rhythm of life, in an utterance of such exquisitely decadent despair as

Je suis comme le roi d'un pays pluvieux,
Riche mais impuissant, jeune et pourtant très vieux!

The only pity from my point of view is that Baudelaire could not allow the Spirit in him to find tongue in the highest key possible to his consciousness. No poet but is eternally grateful for a magnificent phenomenon like Baudelaire; but one need not on that account be completely satisfied with him: I for one endeavour to catch a glimpse of the supreme noumenon behind Baudelaire. And that is why I am not fundamentally content even if in my own personal output there comes into being many a phrase which, to use Alfred Douglas's powerful figure, could be thrust “like a lean knife between the ribs of Time”. It is not merely first-class poetry I yearn to

produce: most gratefully I receive whatever the Gods grant, but it is my constant aspiration to manifest a particular kind of rhythm, a particular soul-vibration—spiritually the highest which I can recognise now that Sri Aurobindo has shown me the path of inwardness. Great verse has a vast variety of word-movement and on the wings of many different styles can one reach the top of Parnassus. Shakespeare's teeming vitality of phrase, Shelley's ethereal rainbow-speech, Yeats's jewelled spontaneities of occult utterance have all the inevitable character which makes for immortal life in human memory: they are each a type of poetic masterhood, but the rhythm I search for is not dominantly there. The expression is flawless, the music unimpeachable, but where is any assured glow of the voice of some supreme consciousness that rolls from the everlasting to the everlasting, the voice not of that multi-coloured passion which filled the spacious Elizabethan days or that haloed subtlety of emotion which is Shelley's inimitable genius or that exquisite sensibility whereby Yeats conjures up vistas of a twilight perfection—the voice which for a moment before returning to its home of fathomless awe lingers in a miraculous line like Wordsworth's

Voyaging through strange seas of thought, alone.

The Romanticist's Conception of Beauty

(An elucidation of Sri Aurobindo's conception of the four-fold beauty in Art)

BY V. K. GOKAK

I

I HAVE described my theme as 'The Romanticist's Conception of Beauty'.

But I should perhaps make it clear at the outset that it is not my intention to attempt here any nice distinction between the romanticist's and the classicist's approach. Their apprehension of Beauty is essentially the same, though variations of form and colour there are bound to be in such an apprehension. My object in this article is to discuss generally the nature of the poet's vision of Beauty and to see whether it can be used as a criterion of poetic greatness. The vision of a poet may easily differ from that of another, both in intensity and in comprehensiveness. If we are in a position to ascertain the nature and extent of this difference, it might help us to account for the varying levels of poetic excellence. This will not, obviously, help us to judge the stylistic and formal beauty of poetry save in an indirect manner, in so far as the poet's apprehension of Beauty affects the world of his imagery and his emotional phrasing. But we will at least be in a position to ascertain the depth and range of a poet's personality,—of that 'creative self-sculpture' which is the highest gift of poetry to mankind. Again, I speak of 'The Romanticist's Conception of Beauty' because the psychology of the poet is set forth in great detail, and with remarkable clearness and insight, by the romantic poets rather than the classicists.

Coleridge was perhaps the most philosophic of all the English romantics. He made a deliberate attempt, more than any of his contemporaries, to comprehend his metaphysical beliefs and experiences into a regular philosophic system. Keats comes very near him in this respect and the number of the scholars who are eager to devote their time and talent to a study of his letters is steadily on the increase. Keats is, in fact, more illuminating than Coleridge in some ways, especially because he is less 'academic', a word which is often synonymous with 'pedantic'. Keats confessed in one of his letters (Letter 62, Forman's edition) that he could have no enjoyment in the world but 'continual drinking of knowledge'. But his premature death prevented him from either satisfying his passion for reading or from proving all his philosophy on his pulses. Coleridge lived on to his sixty-second year.

But his last years were clouded with sorrow and gloom. Shelley gives a moving description of Coleridge in the years of the decline of his genius, in his *Letter to Maria Gisborne*:

“You will see Coleridge—he who sits obscure
In the exceeding lustre and the pure
Intense irradiation of a mind
Which, with its own internal lightning blind,
Flags wearily through darkness and despair—
A cloud-encircled meteor of the air,
A hooded eagle among blinking owls.”

Who these blinking owls were we need not pause to consider. Southey was probably one of them. Before weariness and despair succeeded in hooding the eaglelike vision of Coleridge, he detected several remarkable truths about aesthetic experience and stated them as clearly as he could. The twelfth chapter in his *Biographia Literaria* is a mine of wisdom from this point of view. The following passage is one of those laconic statements of Coleridge which open up a whole vista of fresh and invigorating thought. After stating that philosophy, which is the science of ultimate truths, is employed on the objects of the Inner Sense or the *realising intuition*, Coleridge proceeds to remark: “One man’s consciousness extends only to the pleasant or unpleasant sensations caused in him by external impressions; another enlarges his inner sense to a consciousness of forms and quantity; a third in addition to the image is conscious of the conception or notion of the thing; a fourth attains to a notion of his notions—he reflects on his own reflections; and thus we may say without impropriety, that the one possesses more or less inner sense, than the other.”

I. A. Richards quotes this passage in his fascinating book, *Coleridge on Imagination*. But he does not develop its implications. He only reinforces its general sense with a quotation from Blake, ‘A fool sees not the same tree that a wise man sees.’ This article is an attempt to set forth the full significance of the degrees of the Inner Sense postulated by Coleridge in the foregoing passage and to illustrate them with examples drawn from the experiences and writings of the romantics.

II

The consciousness of the pleasant sensations caused by external impressions is the first stage in the operation of the Inner Sense and it may be

described as the perception of Sensuous Beauty. Every human being is master of such a perception by the very fact of his humanness. "The first range of hills", says Coleridge, "that encircles the scanty vale of human life, is the horizon for the majority of its inhabitants...By the many, even this range, the natural limit and bulwark of the vale, is but imperfectly known." Even in this field in which every human being moves effortlessly and with perfect ease, it is the poet who sheds light in unexpected places and reveals the rich and strange beauty of what seems to be commonplace or familiar. Thus it is Andrew Marvell who makes us realise the luxury of a reverie in a garden:

"Annihilating all that's made
To a green thought in a green shade."

or Tennyson who gives us the astronomical poetry of

"Still, as while Saturn whirls his steadfast shade
Sleeps on his luminous ring,"—

to take instances almost at random.

There can, of course, be no poetry without an apprehension of imaginative beauty. All experience is only raw poetic material unless it is transmuted by the shaping spirit of Imagination. But we can, nevertheless, glean our idea of Sensuous Beauty from poetry, if we bear this limiting condition in mind.

In his noble allegory of that 'large mansion of many apartments'—the mansion of Life—Keats speaks of Sensuous Beauty as the infant or thoughtless chamber, the chamber in which we remain as long as we do not think. We remain there a long while and some of us begin and end our sojourn on earth in that very chamber. Keats also describes the realms of Sensuous Beauty in his poem, *Sleep and Poetry*. He calls them the realms of Flora and Pan:

"First the realm I'll pass
Of Flora and old Pan sleep in the grass,
Feed upon apples red and strawberries,
And choose each pleasure that my fancy sees;
Catch the white-handed nymphs in shady places,
To woo sweet kisses from averted faces..."

Since Keats composed these lines, the word 'shady' in 'shady places' has undergone a semantic degeneration, so that the reference to 'nymphs in

shady places' is in the danger of being construed today as an image of sensual, rather than sensuous, beauty. But Keats was absolutely innocent of our sophistication with reference to that word. Keats gives another list of beautiful things in *Endymion*, a list that is well known:

"Such the sun, the moon,
Trees old and young sprouting a shady boon
For simple sheep; and such are daffodils
With the green world they live in..."

It will be noted that, in a perception of sensuous beauty, the thing of beauty is admired for its own sake, objectively as it were. The observer does not penetrate deeply into its qualities. He frankly accepts it as it comes to him and holds it up for his own, as well as others', delight. The subjective element makes itself felt only in the selection that each observer or poet makes for himself while framing his list. Every poet has his own preferences. Here is a list from Browning, the list he gives in *Saul*:

"Oh, the wild joys of living! the leaping from rock up to rock—
The strong rending of boughs from the fir-tree,—the cool silver shock
Of the plunge in the pool's living water,—the hunt of the bear...
And the sleep in the dried river-channel where bulrushes tell
That the water was wont to go warbling so softly and well,
How good is man's life, the mere living! how fit to employ
All the heart and the soul and the senses for ever in joy!"

It does not require even a moment's consideration to realise that these images are characteristic of the robustness of Browning's outlook, of the preferences of a man who was ever a fighter. This can be maintained even when we make allowance for the dramatic context in which these images are placed.

There can be a preference of mood even as there is a preference of personality. Here is Masfield, the lover, speaking in a poem on *Beauty*:

"I have heard the song of the blossoms and the old chant of the sea,
And seen strange lands from under the arched white sails of ships;
But the loveliest things of Beauty God ever has showed to me
Are her voice, and her hair, and eyes, and the dear red curve of her lips."

The statement in these lines can be true only in the sense that Beauty is Truth. Masfield writes in quite a different strain when the sea-fever is raging in him:

"I must down to the seas again, for the call of the running tide
Is a wild call and a clear call that may not be denied;
And all I ask is a windy day with the white clouds flying,
And the flung spray and the blown spume, and the sea-gulls crying."

Hopkins images the sensuous beauty of the whole world by means of a few significant symbols in his *Pied Beauty*. Rupert Brooke, on the other hand, tries to harness realism and science to the service of Sensuous Beauty in *The Great Lover*:

"These I have loved:
White plates and cups, clean-gleaming,
Ringed with blue lines; and feathery, faery dust..."

This sentiment need not be dismissed as an abnormal preoccupation with crockery on the part of a young bachelor. But while Rupert Brooke's realism enables him to bracket with rainbows and flowers new images like the 'deep-panting train', the 'cold graveness of iron', the 'keen unpassioned beauty of a great machine' and the 'rough male kiss of blankets', it is apt now and then to degenerate into a quest after novelty for its own sake, as in his mention of 'the good smell of old clothes' and the 'musty reek that lingers about dead leaves'.

But we cannot remain for ever in the world of sensuous beauty. That would signify either stagnation or abnormality. Man would die either of sheer inanition or restlessness if he did not take the plunge inwards and become a denizen of what Keats calls the realms of Apollo, of imaginative beauty. When Keats yearned for a life of sensations rather than of thought, he was not looking for anything 'sensational' every moment of his life. He was thinking of integral experience—experience in which the instinctive and intuitive life are in harmony with each other—as opposed to the imperfect and partial approach of the intellect. The tourist who is after mere 'sensation' resembles Lord C. mentioned by Lamb in *Distant Correspondents*, the lord who came to a pretty green spot while travelling somewhere about Geneva. The spot so took his fancy that he could imagine no place so proper for him to lay his bones in. When he died, his remains were actually carried all that way from England. The sentiment, as Lamb

remarks, degenerated into a feature of silly pride or senseless affectation. Nero reduced Rome to ashes for the exquisite luxury of seeing it burning at night. The involution of De Quincey's imagination in the 'sensations' of opium, and the fondness of Byron and Oscar Wilde for the 'primrose path of dalliance' present peculiar psychological problems to the literary critic. The progress in aesthetic perception from an apprehension of sensuous beauty does not lie in mere extension of range and multiplicity of objects but in creating a new mental world with the aid of the imagination, a world steeped in that light which never was on sea or land.

III

This brings us to the world of imaginative beauty,—of a 'consciousness of forms and quantity' as Coleridge puts it. Imaginative beauty is born when the impressions produced in the mind by external objects begin to develop a life of their own as *images* and make the mind of the observer a 'mansion for all lovely forms'. It was in this way that the 'jocund company' of golden daffodils which Wordsworth saw on one of his walks became an abiding inspiration with him:

"For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude."

Wordsworth is never tired of insisting on this priest-like function of the imagination, on the way in which it administers to the spiritual nourishment of man. Every poet, as Keats said, is a monk and his imagination is his monastery. The lovely forms of Nature that Wordsworth saw near Tintern Abbey fulfilled a similar function for him:

"But oft in lonely rooms and 'mid the din
Of towns and cities I have owed to them,
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood and felt along the heart;
And passing even into my purer mind,
With tranquil restoration..."

The genius of Keats is so different from that of Wordsworth. But Keats is at one with the older poet in describing the priest-like task of these

images of things of beauty. They are the flowery band that bind us to the earth. We do not merely feel these essences for one short hour. They

“Haunt us till they become a cheering light
Unto our souls, and bound to us so fast,
That, whether there be shine or gloom o’ercast,
They always must be with us, or we die.”

This state of perception is what Keats calls the second apartment in the Mansion of Life, the Chamber of Maiden Thought. We are impelled to enter it by the ‘awakening of the thinking principle within us’. Here, says Keats, “We become intoxicated with the light and the atmosphere, we see nothing but pleasant wonders, and think of delaying there for ever in delight.” The ecstasy and wine of youth flow from this region in the human mind. Everyone whose soul is not a clod has felt these raptures at one time or the other. The universal appeal of the world’s great love stories, of great works of art like *Romeo and Juliet* and *St. Agnes’ Eve*, can be accounted for in this very way. To cling desperately to these first dreams of youth and to equate life with them, even when we have outgrown our youthfulness, is to court disillusionment and disappointment. It is as futile as the attempt to prolong our experience of sensuous beauty by multiplying endlessly the objects of our adoration, without plunging inwards. Even for the poet who sees his beloved as ‘a phantom of delight’ and feels prompted to say about her presence:

“My heart would hear her and beat,
Were it earth in an earthy bed;
My dust would hear her and beat,
Had lain for a century dead;
Would start and tremble under her feet,
And blossom in purple and red,—

there comes a time when he simply regards her as a ‘traveller between life and death.’ Failure to recognise this truth regarding the imaginative life leads to the psychological disease known as Bovaryism, after the heroine of Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary*. Madame Bovary is the symbol of that frustration which is the result of an over-sanguine expectation that life and love would be ‘roses, roses all the way’, forgetting the fact that it is only a few moments of youth that strew them on our path. The only alternative

to stagnation at this stage is a further plunge inwards, the opening up of another layer of the mind. There are others who labour for mortal good and who seek no wonder but the human face. But we are dealing in this article with the psychology of the seeker of beauty, not truth. Even a seeker of beauty has his altruistic motive and inspiration, as when Keats remarked that he would 'jump down Aetna for any great public good.' But Keats wisely postponed it as the work of 'maturer years'. The young altruist, may, in his enthusiasm, suffer the fate of Djabal in *The Return of the Druses* by Browning or of the disillusioned Irish patriot in Yeats' play on a similar theme. But it is true that the 'pleasant wonders' of imaginative beauty are fascinating as long as they last. Though A.E. voiced a profound truth in the lines :

"The gay romance of song
Unto the spirit-life doth not belong",

it can be maintained that this very 'romance' of imaginative beauty is helpful and even indispensable in leading the seeker to the spirit-life that A. E. speaks of.

We should not forget to note, while dealing with imaginative beauty, that the world of dreams and of psychical phenomena also contributes to it. The poetry of the romantics is full of these visionary gleams. Some passages in Wordsworth's *Prelude*, Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*, Shelley's *The Question*, Keats' *Sleep and Poetry*,—all these and similar poems draw, not only their inspiration but also their imagery from the Higher Mind. Here, for instance, is a description of Babylon in the days of its magnificence, as A.E. saw it in a vision:

"The mystery and magnificence, the myriad beauty and the sins
Come back to me. I walk beneath the shadowy multitude of towers;
Within the gloom the fountain jets its pallid mist in lily flowers."

The theory of 'pure poetry' and of 'Art for Art's sake', apart from the limited validity which they possess with reference to poetry and art generally, have their origin in the experience attained in this very sphere of imaginative beauty. The seeker of beauty finds in it a permanence which is unattainable in the sensuous world, the world of transience and change. Intoxicated with its light and its wonder, he prefers to dwell there for ever, if only he could. Like Keats he asks himself the question: "And can I ever bid these joys farewell?"

IV

But he has to lift his tents and march on, if he is to remain true to the questionings in his mind and answer like Keats:

“Yes, I must pass them for a nobler life,
Where I may find the agonies, the strife
Of human hearts.”

Tennyson's *Palace of Art* presents the allegory of a soul dwelling in a lordly mansion in Godlike isolation. But the soul soon feels that its mimic heaven is a spot of dull stagnation and throws its royal robes away:

“‘Make me a cottage in the vale’, she said,
‘Where I may mourn and pray.’”

This very yearning for human sympathy and fellowship compels the artist to plunge into that gulf of sorrow and agony which divides the realms of Imaginative, from those of Intellectual, Beauty. This is the dark night of the soul for the artist. In the words of Keats, his vision is now ‘sharpened into the heart and nature of man’ and his nerves are ‘convinced that the world is full of misery and heartbreak, pain, sickness and oppression—whereby this Chamber of Maiden Thought becomes gradually darkened’. It happens then that ‘we feel not the balance of good and evil. We are in a mist....We feel the ‘burden of the mystery’. Shelley’s “Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought” can be true only in the sense that every poet of note has felt this ‘burden of the mystery’ at one time or the other; for there are songs of other and higher realms as Shelley himself knew.

Keats has given us a vivid description of the Slough of Despond that he had to pass through before he attained the serene heights of vision where his best poetry was born. He was quite happy when he saw the fringe of the sea’s silver foam. The singing of the nightingale was not spoilt for him as yet. But he soon saw too far into the sea, into the core of an eternal fierce destruction:

“The shark at savage prey,—the hawk at pounce,
The gentle Robin like a Pard of Ounce,
Ravening a worm.”

and so lost all his happiness,

Where, then, do all these dark passages, spoken of by Keats, lead us? Doubtless, they all lead us to the third chamber in the mansion,—to the realm of intellectual Beauty. As to which one of these passages a poet takes depends on his training and temperament. This suffering, or Purgatory blind, is occasioned by a state of mind described by Keats in his *Epistle to Reynolds* from which I have quoted above:

“Or is it that imagination brought
Beyond its proper bound, yet still confined,
Lost in a sort of Purgatory blind,
Cannot refer to any standard law
Of either earth or heaven?”

Shelley was in a similar plight. In his self-portrait in *Adonais*, he likens himself to Actaeon, the huntsman, who saw Diana bathing and was turned into a stag devoured by his own hounds:

“he, as I guess,
Had gazed on Nature’s naked loveliness,
Actaeon-like, and now he fled astray
With feeble steps o’er the world’s wilderness,
And his own thoughts, along that rugged way,
Pursued, like raging hounds and their prey.”

Gazing on Nature’s naked loveliness corresponds to lifting the pointed curtain of life, inviting the ‘burden of the mystery’ in one’s own eagerness to unravel the riddle of life. Wordsworth had his share of it, as is clear from these lines in the fragment of *The Recluse*:

“And see ill sights
Of madding passions mutually inflamed;
Must hear Humanity in fields and groves
Pipe solitary anguish; or must hang
Brooding above the fierce confederate storm
Of sorrow, barricaded ever more
Within the walls of cities.”

Suffering was, for Wordsworth, permanent, obscure and dark. It shared the nature of infinity. Tennyson was struck aghast by the sight of Nature ‘red in tooth and claw’ and the sound of the

“ever-breaking shore
Tumbling in the Godless deep?”

Some poets like Blake, more delicately made, are shattered by an experience of this kind:

“I am; yet what I am who cares or knows?”

The dreamer rots on the Temple of Saturn, as Keats rotted half, venoming all his days and bearing more woe than all sins deserve! There is no hope for him unless he either joins the band of those who ‘love their fellows even to the death’ or evolves into the poet who ‘pours out a balm upon the world.’

V

Wordsworth claimed that, even after experiencing all the oppressions of the earth, he would not feel forlorn:

“That even these
Hearing, I be not downcast or forlorn!”

This is possible because, as Keats said, at the very time the Chamber of Maiden Thought is darkened, “On all sides of it many doors are set open—but all dark—all leading to dark passages...To this point was Wordsworth come, as far as I can conceive when he wrote *Tintern Abbey* and it seems to me that his genius is explorative of those dark passages”. To what destination, then, did these passages lead Wordsworth? Doubtless, to the realm of Intellectual Beauty. The word is Shelley’s. But we have to remember that Intellectual Beauty is not merely the beauty of the intellect. ‘Archetypal Beauty’ would perhaps make the sense clearer. It is only when a poet apprehends intuitively a law or an archetype and proves it in his blood and brain that he emerges unscathed from the Slough of Despond.

Spenser knew that the ‘goodly hew of white and red’, with which the cheeks are sprinkled, would decay. But he had also realised that the fair lamp from whose celestial ray feminine beauty proceeded, was immortal:

“For it is heavenly borne and can not die,
Being a parcell of the purest skie”.

Indeed, Spenser penetrated beneath the mask of mutability and perceived the substance that is unchanging:

“The substance is not changed, nor altered,
But th’ only forme and outward fashion.”

Milton apprehended a law of the spirit that would be a cure to all the ills of the world when he wrote in *Comus*:

“Mortals, that would follow me,
Love Virtue; she alone is free.
She can teach you how to climb
Higher than the sphery chime;
Or, if Virtue feeble were,
Heaven itself would stoop to her.”

A similar apprehension soothes the mind of Tennyson when he says:

“I curse not Nature, no, nor death,
For nothing is that errs from law”

or of Arnold when he recognises with stoic calm that the stars and the sea

“Bounded by themselves, and unobservant
In what state God’s other works may be,
In their own tasks all their powers pouring,
These attain the mighty life you see.”

Or it may be a surpassing moment of vision which lifts the poet out of his world of cares and agonies, as with Shelley in the vision recorded in *Alastor*, the vision in which he saw Intellectual Beauty imaged as an Arab maid:

“He dreamed a veiled maid
Sate near him, talking in low solemn tones.
Her voice was like the voice of his own soul
Heard in the calm of thought,.....
Knowledge and truth and virtue were her theme,
And lofty hopes of divine liberty,
Thoughts the most dear to him, and poesy,
Herself a poet.”

To take an instance from gifted poetic utterance emanating from our midst, Mrs. Naidu who recognises, in the following lines, that life is three parts pain,—

“Till ye have battled with great grief and fears,
And borne the conflict of dream-shattering years,
Wounded with fierce desire and worn with strife,
Children, ye have not lived: for this is life.”

also records the divine assurance to the soul in prayer:

“I bending from My sevenfold height
Will teach thee of My quickening grace,
Life is a prism of My light
And Death the shadow of My face.”

Thus it is only when a poet clings to some eternal law, archetype or moment of transcendental experience that he realises the truth of Keats' utterance:—

“To bear all naked truths,
And to envisage circumstance, all calm,
That is the top of sovereignty.”

It is only then that the things of beauty become joys for ever,

“An endless fountain of immortal drink,
Pouring into us from the heaven's brink.”

That other and greater realisation, the apprehension of the Principle of Beauty in all things,—beautiful as well as ugly, good as well as evil, the hare and the hippopotamus, the tiger and the lamb,—is the ultimate destination for which the pilgrim on this path of beauty is bound.

These higher levels of consciousness are invariably present in all great poetry. It is really surprising how, in poem after poem by Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats, a perception of beauty culminates frequently in Intellectual Beauty. This progressive presentation of the fact of their perception has almost developed into a technique with them. Thus sensuous and imaginative beauty are blended in Wordsworth's vision of the ‘phantom of delight’. But he soon sees her as a woman capable of ‘Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears and smiles’. Finally, he even forgets that she is a woman. She is just

“A Being breathing thoughtful breath,
A Traveller between life and death.”

In *Nutting*, Wordsworth tells us that the beauty of the silent trees makes him feel that there is a spirit in the woods. *Tintern Abbey* and *The Ode on Intimations* are too famous to need detailed analysis. In *Tintern Abbey*, Wordsworth describes the three successive stages even more clearly, though with regard to one theme,—Nature. He speaks of the glad animal movements and the coarser pleasures of his boyish days, the transfiguration of the same scenery by the light of the imagination which made the sounding cataract haunt him like a passion and his apprehension of a presence in it that disturbed him with the joy of elevated thoughts, after he had heard the still, sad music of humanity and been chastened and subdued by it. He speaks, in the great ode, of the simple creed of childhood, the piping and play of children. He then thinks of the days when the earth and every common sight seemed to him apparelled in the freshness of a dream, in the celestial light of imaginative beauty. But the glory soon passes away and he feels the shades of the prison-house closing on him. There come the years that bring the inevitable yoke—the yoke of marriage among other things—and custom lies heavy upon him,—‘heavy as frost and deep almost as life’. He is shaken to the depths by

“those obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishings;
Blank misgivings of a creature
Moving about in worlds not realised.”

But strength comes to him through Intellectual Beauty,—through primal sympathy, the soothing thoughts that spring out of human suffering, the faith that looks through death and the philosophic mind.

Shelley reaches out to this very principle, whether in Love or in Nature. He presents his direct vision of it in his *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*, in the passage already quoted from *Alastor*, in a famous passage in *Epipsy-chidion*, beginning,—

“On an imagined shore,
Under the grey beak of some promonotory
She met me, robed in such exceeding glory,
That I beheld her not,”

in the hymn to Asia in *Prometheus Unbound*:

“Life of Life! thy lips enkindle”

and in *The Triumph of Life* as a shape all light,—

“Like day she came,
Making the night a dream.”

The sensitive plant symbolises his own soul,—it desires what it has not, the beautiful. Mrs. Boinville, Harriet Grove, Mary, Emily,—all these were dear to him, at one time or the other, because he thought he found in them the Vision he sought. Keats, when he dies, becomes a presence to be felt and known in darkness and in light. The West Wind is the breath of Autumn's being. But it is also Marut,—an elemental deity that is both destroyer and preserver. It drives not only dead leaves over the earth to quicken a new birth, but also dead thoughts. The sun is a beautiful god leaving his robe upon the ocean-foam. But he is also the eye with which the universe ‘beholds itself and knows itself divine.’ Mont Blanc and the many-voiced, many-coloured valley of Arve are lovely. But Shelley also perceives in the mountains

“The secret strength of things
Which governs thought and to the infinite dome
Of heaven is as a law.”

The Apennine is an ancient and dim and grey mountain in the light of day. But at night it is a power which walks abroad with the storm. The skylark is a bird that sings and soars. But it is also a spirit whose *brain* knows gladness, even half of which would make the whole world listen to the poet. Viewed imaginatively, the cloud is a boat with lightning as its pilot. It is the roof over a torrent sea, with the mountains as its columns. But looked at from a higher plane, it is an immortal being that changes but cannot die.

Like Shelley's cloud, Keats' nightingale also is not born for death. It is the voice of eternal beauty singing to mankind down the centuries and charming the magic casements of the human soul. The Grecian urn is global like the earth. Like the earth, again; it is a depositary of the ashes of the dead. But its beauty which captivates the eye and the imagination, also speaks to the human spirit and conveys the message that Beauty is

Truth. Autumn, the season of mists and mellow fruitfulness, also brings home to Keats the lesson that ripeness is all. Even woman appeals to him only as an image of eternal Beauty. "I hope I shall never marry," wrote Keats in one of his letters, "the mighty abstract Idea I have of Beauty in all things stifles the more divided and minute domestic happiness—an amiable wife and sweet children I contemplate as a part of that Beauty, but I must have a thousand of those beautiful particles to fill up my heart." Women sometimes appeared to him as children 'to whom I would rather give a sugar plum than my time.'

VI

Intellectual Beauty is not philosophy. It is philosophic insight. The next and last step in this evolution of man which we have been tracing is the realisation of Spiritual Beauty. In the words of Coleridge, this fourth level of the Inner Sense is the act of attaining a notion of one's own notions, of reflecting upon one's own reflections. Coleridge's statement on this subject is coloured by that nebulousity that Peacock makes fun of, a mistiness which frequently vitiated the philosophic writings of Coleridge. In any case, the fourth level of consciousness can only be the act of realising that all-pervasive Spirit in which all the principles and archetypes found in the realms of Intellectual Beauty are harmonised and reconciled to one another. It is only after struggling through the red mid-region of sorrow and agony that the poet sees a star or two, the stars of Intellectual Beauty. Standing on a higher plane, he finds that the same sky holds all the stars, that the same divine hand lights all those lamps of love.

Keats' *Hyperion* is perhaps the most revealing poem in English with reference to the psychology of this experience. His vision of Moneta, Pnemosyne or the Goddess of Memory symbolises his love of the Principle of Beauty in all things,—good as well as evil. Moneta is none else but the World Soul as apprehended by Keats. The high tragedy acting in the dark chambers of her skull gives a dread stress to her cold lips. But there is also a benignant light in her planetary eyes:

"Then saw I a wan face,
Not pined by human sorrows, but bright-blanch'd
By an immortal sickness which kills not;
It works a constant change, which happy death
Can put no end to; deathwards progressing
To no death was that visage; it had passed

The lily and the snow; and beyond these
 I must not think now, though I saw that face—
 But for her eyes I should have fled away.
 They held me back with a benignant light,
 Soft mitigated by divinest lids
 Hald-closed and visionless entire they seem'd
 Of all external things;—they saw me not,
 But in blank splendour, beam'd like the mild moon,
 Who comforts those she sees not, who knows not
 What eyes are upward cast.”

Here is a picture of stark misery in its most terrifying aspect,—the misery which has no end. But it is borne with a serenity of soul which can only be indicative of a union with Infinity, with God. What transforming effect this vision had on him, Keats describes by way of the godhood which Apollo attained when he saw that face. Keats' experience has its affinity with the revelation of the change-world as the Body of the God of gods, in the Gita, to Arjuna. Arjuna is terror-stricken at the sight:

“Stretched high as heaven, rainbow-coloured, dazzling,
 With Mouths wide open, blazing giant Eyes,—
 At sight of Thee my inmost heart is quaking,
 No strength is left in me,—no peace, O God!”

There is a similar cataloguing in the Gita, as in Keats, though on a much vaster scale. What Keats sees is only the World Soul, Nature Incarnate, not God:

“Mute thou remainest—mute! yet I can read
 A wondrous lesson in thy silent face:
 Knowledge enormous makes a god of me.
 Names, deeds, grey legends, dire events, rebellions,
 Majesties, sovran voices, agonies,
 Creations and destroyings, all at once
 Pour into the wide hollows of my brain,
 And deify me as if some blithe wine
 Or bright elixir peerless I had drunk,
 And so become immortal...”

It is not merely a sense of the pageant of history that Keats presents in these lines. If that was so, every student of history would have become an Apollo

or Keats. Up to this point in his spiritual evolution Keats had striven to realise how Beauty was Truth. He now finds that Truth is Beauty, that all Truth, however terrible, is Beauty and we accept it as such when we get to know it closely. The bright elixir is nothing else but an intense awareness of the divine significance of each fact whether it be a creation or destroying, agony or joy.

Once on this plane of spiritual beauty, a poet becomes either a mystic with an abiding sense of the Unity that underlies the multitudinous variety of the universe, or a great epic poet or dramatist familiar with all the passions and movements of humanity, with all the archetypes of human character. This distinction between the subjective and the objective, which grows keener at every step and on each one of the four planes of vision, is seen at its sharpest and clearest on this plane. Imagism is only objectivity on the plane of imaginative beauty. Equally well, the individualism of Milton or Shelley is but subjectivity on the plane of Intellectual Beauty, as is made clear by their almost constant preoccupation with one or two principles like liberty and obedience, or love and liberty. The early poetry of the Romantics, like Keats' sonnet on reading Chapman's Homer, is full of examples of subjectivity on the imaginative plane while Browning's predilection for the delineation of certain types of human character, like lover, artist and thinker, is an instance of objectivity on the plane of Intellectual Beauty. It is only on the spiritual plane that we get the world's best examples of the subjective as well as the objective artist, the poet who becomes a mystic on the lines indicated by Blake in:

"To see a World in a grain of sand,
And a Heaven in a wild flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand,
And Eternity in an hour."

and is a perfect instance of the Wordsworthian or egotistical sublime, or an epic poet or dramatist like Shakespeare or Homer, with a poetical character which Keats describes in one of his letters: (Letter No. 93) "It is every thing and nothing—It has no character—it enjoys light and shade; it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated—It has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen...A poet is the most unpoetical of any thing in existence; because he has no Identity—he is continually in ^{for}—and filling some other Body—The Sun, the Moon, the Sea and Men and Women who are creatures of impulse, are poetical and have about them an unchangeable attribute—the poet has none."

VII

Certain interesting results can be obtained if we apply this scale of values to the work of the major English poets. Chaucer has his affinities with Valmiki, Vyasa, Homer and Shakespeare. But he falls short of absolute greatness in that his mystical apprehension of life is not commensurate with his hold on the objective world. In introducing the distinction between the subjective and the objective artist, we should not forget to note that, in another sense, all Beauty is one and indivisible. As Blake remarks in his appendix to the Prophetic Books, "As all men are alike in Outward Form, so, and with the same infinite variety, all are alike in the Poetic Genius." No man can become exclusively a subjective or objective artist. Shelley, with his intense subjectivity, was able to write a play like *The Cenci*. In spite of his supreme impersonality and objectivity, Shakespeare gives us now and then a glimpse of his mystical apprehension of life. Subjectivity and objectivity are both but *perspectives* of the same vision or insight, the gradual unfoldment of the fineness or subtlety which it has been our endeavour here to set forth. The more one knows oneself, the more one understands the world. Both self-knowledge and world-knowledge are conditioned and promoted by soul-knowledge. Chaucer's creations are not so towering as those of Shakespeare because, in the last analysis, Chaucer had not sounded the depths of his own personality as *deeply* as Shakespeare had done his. To use a distinction that Keats draws between Milton and Wordsworth, he 'did not think into the human heart' as deeply. The preoccupation with the 'One' or the 'Many' thus resolves itself mainly into a question of emphasis, of temperamental preference and aesthetic equipment.

Spenser was pre-eminently a subjective artist. His vision was imperfect in so far as it excluded evil. He wrote in his *Hymn to Heavenly Beauty*: "All that's good is beautiful and fair." But the full-fledged poet realises the Principle of Beauty even in things evil. Blake's vision was whole in that he realised the beauty of the tiger as well as the lamb. "He who sees the Infinite in all things sees God", wrote Blake. But he was not sure of his expression, as he was of his inspiration. His unequal expression and the obscurity of his imagery proceed finally from a fundamental shortcoming in Blake,—his inability to relate his dream-world to the world of reality,—the insufficiency, that is, of his experience of the objective world. The great poet lives in the heart of the One as well as the Many. It is Milton's balanced apprehension of both that partly accounts for the greatness of his poetry, though it has to be admitted that his apprehension is not of the greatest.

Wordsworth knew that blessed mood in which

“we are laid asleep
In body and become a living soul.”

He had experienced those ‘first affections’ which are ‘a master light of all our seeing’. He had apprehended the Power whose dwelling is ‘the light of setting suns’. But his was an intermittent vision. Both Shelley and Keats had a surer hold of ‘That light whose smile kindles the universe’. Shelley had realised his error of seeking in a mortal image the likeness of what is eternal. Keats was on the point of realising the Principle of Beauty in all things. But death cut short the absolute seership of both.

Tennyson had only a vague sense of pantheism. Browning’s genius feared the ‘white radiance’ and also suffered from an obtrusiveness of the intellect. “I only make men and women speak,” he wrote, “—give you truth broken into prismatic hues, and fear the pure white light, even if it is in me...” Francis Thompson’s *The Hound of Heaven*, Ralph Hodgson’s *The Song of Honour* and some of the poems of A.E., the Irish mystic, are instances, in recent years, of an apprehension of the different aspects of Spiritual Beauty. Here is a stanza from Sri Aurobindo’s *The Rose of God* in which the radiance of eternity is not merely white but roseate:—

“Rose of God, damask force of Infinity, red icon of might,
Rose of Power with thy diamond halo piercing the night!
Ablaze in the will of the mortal, design the wonder of thy plan,
Image of Immortality, outbreak of the Godhead in man.”

VIII

We began this article with the statement made by Coleridge regarding the degrees of the Inner Sense. We have seen by now how the theory as well as the practice of the other romantic poets confirms the truth of that statement. Here is a verse from the Gita (Ch. 3, Verse 42) which posits the same spiritual hierarchy:—

“They say that the five senses are subtle; subtler than these is the mind. Man’s reason is subtler than the mind; yet subtler than reason is He.”

Kanakadasa, a kannada poet who lived about the middle of the sixteenth century, presents, in a metaphysical lyric, the problem of Appearance and Reality on these very four planes:

“Are you, O Father, a part of Illusion, or is Illusion a part of you? Is Space enclosed within the World or the World within Space? Or is the distinction between World and Space but the product of the eye? Does the eye derive from reason or reason from the eye? Or are both, O Father, finally united in you?”

Sri Aurobindo has apprehended and applied this very truth in his review and account of English poetry and the poetry of the future, especially of the poetry of the romantic poets. It is a truth which deserves to be recognised as a cardinal principle of literary criticism.

Poetry, in a sense, is the most social of the arts. It knows no racial frontiers and it speaks to the whole of humanity in terms of imaginative reason and in accents of unmistakable emotion. It binds man to man in a spirit of loving brotherhood. It is through the quality of the vision enshrined in it that it aspires to attain its supreme fulfilment,—the transformation of humanity which is, now, a ‘wide heath of furze and briars, with here and there a remote oak or pine’, into what Keats called a ‘grand democracy of forest trees.’

Andromeda

BY K. R. SRINIVASA IYENGAR

I

THE Andromeda myth is among the most enchanting items in our vast racial heritage. Dhruva, the unhappy Hindu Prince, became in the fullness of time Dhruva the immaculate, Dhruva the Pole Star. Likewise Andromeda the 'accursed' Ethiopian Princess became at long last Andromeda the blessed, Andromeda the bright northern constellation in the vicinity of Perseus and Cassiopea. Poets of all times have been drawn to Andromeda as sensitive iron is drawn to a magnet. Sophocles and Euripides rendered her life in terms of tragic poetry, but the plays are unhappily lost. The lost plays of Euripides, like the lost plays of Aeschylus and the lost plays of Sophocles, are our everlasting regret. But, as Mr. A. E. Haigh points out,

"... the drama whose loss we have most reason to regret is the *Andromeda*, in which the principal feature was the love of Perseus for the princess whose life he had saved, and which appears to have been the solitary example, among the great tragedies of antiquity, of a plot based upon the romantic affection of a youth for a maiden".¹

Mr. Haigh adds that the *Andromeda* was placed in the highest rank by the ancients, and he therefore concludes that it was perhaps an even greater play than the surviving tragedies of Euripides.² Mr. Gilbert Norwood describes the play as "a charming love-story full of romance and poetical loveliness"³ and from the fragments that have luckily survived almost reconstructs its plot. When the *Andromeda* was first presented, the whole town seems to have gone crazy! That fragments like the following have defied the ravages of time must be taken as an indication of the play's popularity. This from

¹ *The Tragic Drama of the Greeks* (1925), pp. 222-23

² *ibid.*, p. 282

³ *Greek Tragedy* (1928), p. 298

Andromeda's lament at the beginning of the play—

O solemn night,
How slow thy coursers trace,
Amid the holy Heaven star-bedight,
Their pathway through the deeps of space...

And this, as Perseus advances to fight the sea-monster—

O Love, of gods and men tyrannic Lord,
Either teach Beauty to unlearn her power,
Or speed true lovers, through the adventurous maze,
That in thy name they enter, to success.¹

An index to the *Andromeda's* popularity is furnished by Aristophanes parodying the play in his *Thesmophoriazusae*, where Mnesilochus-Andromeda, bound to a plank, is rescued at last by Euripides-Perseus! Again, in the *Frogs*, Aristophanes makes Dionysius cite the *Andromeda* as the cause of his adventuring to Hades to seek out Euripides:

There as, on deck, I'm reading to myself
The *Andromeda*, a sudden pang of longing
Shoots through my heart, you can't conceive how keenly...
Well, just that sort of pang devours my heart
For lost Euripides!²

The Latin poet, Ovid, in his greatest work, the *Metamorphoses*, attempted "no less a task than the linking together into one artistically harmonious whole all the stories of classical mythology".³ The Andromeda story duly finds a place in the work. The first half of the fourth Book of the *Metamorphoses* is taken up with the story of Pyramus and Thisbe. Presently Perseus swims into the scene, and, awed and delighted, we follow his triumphant career. We see him cleaving the thin air with his magic wings, the Medusa-head hidden in his hand:

"Having left behind countless peoples all around him and below, he spied at last the Ethiopians and Cepheus' realm. There unrighteous

¹ The renderings are by Mr. Gilbert Norwood.

² *The Frogs* (II. 52-54; 65-66), Trans. by Rogers (Loeb Classics)

³ *The Metamorphoses* (Loeb Classics), Vol. I, p. ix

Ammon had bidden Andromeda, though innocent, to pay the penalty of her mother's words. As soon as Perseus saw her there bound by the arms to a rough cliff—save that her hair gently stirred in the breeze, and the warm tears were trickling down her cheeks, he would have thought her a marble statue—he took fire unwitting, and stood dumb. Smitten by the sight of her exquisite beauty, he almost forgot to move his wings in the air. Then, when he alighted¹ near the maiden, he said : ' Oh! those are not the chains you deserve to wear, but rather those that link fond lovers together ! Tel¹ me, for I would know, your country's name and yours, and why you are chained here.' She was silent at first, for, being a maid, she did not dare address a man; she would have hidden her face modestly with her hands but that her hands were bound. Her eyes were free, and these filled with rising tears. As he continued to urge her, she, lest she should seem to be trying to conceal some fault of her own, told him her name and her country, and what sinful boasting her mother had made of her own beauty. While she was yet speaking, there came a loud sound from the sea, and there, advancing over the broad expanse, a monstrous creature loomed up, breasting the wide waves. The maiden shrieked..."¹

Perseus sees the situation at a glance. He pities Andromeda, and he loves her with exceeding love. Son of Jove and Danae, vanquisher of Gorgon of the snaky locks, magic-winged courser through the air, Perseus will now rescue Andromeda from the sea-monster and so claim her hand in marriage. "The parents accept the condition—for who would refuse?—and beg him to save her, promising him a kingdom as dowry in addition".² Neither in Euripides nor in Ovid is Perseus quite a mediaeval knight-errant rescuing ladies as a matter of course. He is a trifle calculating, prone to think in terms of a *quid pro quo* ; but, then, he is so eligible a young man that what he demands in exchange for the promised rescue is rather an additional gift, and so we needn't be very censorious, after all! Ovid describes the fight with the sea-monster with due elaboration. It is a fearful grapple, but Perseus kills the monster at last, plunging his sword thrice into its vitals ; and Cepheus and Cassiopea salute the hero as son-in-law, " calling him prop and saviour of their house. The maiden also now comes forward, freed from chains, she, the prize as well as cause of his feat." ³

¹ *The Metamorphoses* (Loeb Classics), Vol. I. pp. 225-27

² *ibid.*, p. 229

³ *ibid.* p.231

Perseus, however, has yet to eliminate his rival, Phineas, brother of Cepheus, before he can marry Andromeda. The description of the battle is spread over about two hundred lines of the fifth Book of the *Metamorphoses*. Perseus is at the end nearly overwhelmed by Phineus and his followers. Warning his own friends to turn away their faces, Perseus now brings into play his "secret weapon", the Gorgon's head. Of a sudden his enemies become immovable marble statues, in varied attitudes, with threatening gesture or half-open lips or looks of bewilderment. "Two hundred men survived the fight", says Ovid, and adds: "two hundred saw the Gorgon and turned to stone".¹ Phineus appeals to Perseus to show mercy and spare him. But Perseus wishes to make a perennial exhibition of "most craven" Phineus, and so the Gorgon completes its appointed task and "in marble was fixed the cowardly face, the suppliant look, the pleading hands, the whole cringing attitude".²

It is a straightforward story. There are no puzzling intricacies in the plot, no psychological conundrums to tax the mind. Cassiopea has loved her daughter with a fond mother's love—she has loved her too well, boasted of her beauty, and incurred the wrath of Poseidon. Human pride and divine retribution project blameless Andromeda—almost, if not quite—to the terrible sea-monster's gaping jaws. Perseus resolves the conflict and restores the harmony between man and god. Andromeda, pure and blameless and brave, nevertheless plays but a passive part in the drama. Tremulous virgin princess and beautiful exquisite flower, Andromeda is a paragon of passive sufferance, very unlike the Electras and the Antigones who impetuously go all out to meet their tragic fate.

II

Painters and sculptors of antiquity have vied with the poets to render in ever fresh significance the Perseus-Andromeda myth. In the first volume of the *Mythology of All Races* are reproduced respectively a red-figured *amphora* of about 500 B. C. representing Perseus and a marble relief in the Capitoline Museum, Rome, representing Andromeda's rescue. Perseus is an arresting athletic figure, a compound of colour and self-confidence:

"In his right hand he holds the *herpe*, or sickle-sword, the gift of Hermes, on his shoulders hangs the pouch which he received from

¹ *The Metamorphoses* (Loeb Classics), p. 253

² *ibid.*, p. 255

the Nymphs, and on his feet are the winged sandals which bear him swiftly through the air.”¹

In the marble relief a timeless moment is for ever snapped. It is the splendorous moment following the death of the sea-monster:

“Perseus, wearing the winged sandals, extends his right hand to Andromeda to help her descend from the rocks to which she has been bound, while he holds his left hand behind his back as if to hide the Gorgon’s head...The sea-monster’s head, apparently severed from the body, or, perhaps, as the symbol of the entire body, is lying at the foot of the rocks.”²

Such is the Andromeda myth, rendered by poet and artist in ancient times. It may be that the myth had its origin in the custom of marrying girls to water-spirits in remote times.³ We come across different partial versions of the myth in different ages, different climes. Andromeda is exposed to the sea-monster even as the no less pure and innocent Iphigenia is sacrificed to Artemis, and both, by divine intervention, are saved at the last moment. In a Celtic version, Devorgilla, daughter of the King of the Isles, is given as a tribute to the Fomorians; and Cuchulainn kills the latter and redeems Devorgilla.⁴ Krishna responds to Rukmini’s appeal, eliminates his rival and marries the Vidarbha Princess. In current fiction, every other day we read of sweet seventeen being cruelly bartered away to a rapacious old man and being rescued at the nick of time by a dashing young Romeo, her class-mate and adorer. The sins of the fathers are often visited on their blameless children; and Providence has to intervene in the shape of a Perseus or a Krishna or a Cuchulainn, and redeem them from their threatened fate. The sea-monster, on the other hand, has his affiliations with a number of other projections of evil—the giant snake that the boy Krishna wrestles with and destroys, the python that Appolo tackles and kills, the Sphinx that meets its match at last in young Oedipus, the Minotaur in the Labyrinth that is destroyed by Theseus, the monster, Grendel, his demon-mother, and the dragon, all of whom are destroyed by Beowulf; the dragon that St. George mangles and the Philistine Goliath that young David overwhelms; and so on. Perhaps, some of these monsters were but projections of the primordial

¹ *Mythology of All Races*, Vol. I., Greek and Roman, pp. 32, 36

² *ibid.*

³ Sir James Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, Vol. II, p. 163

⁴ *The Myths of All Races*, Vol. III, p. 144

forces of nature. The Beowulf story has been interpreted as the victory scored by the sun, summer or wind over hostile forces of nature such as darkness, winter or bog.¹ In the early dawn of human civilization, man smelt invisible enemies ringing him round, and he therefore gave them habitations and names and personal histories. As Ruskin once remarked,

“The representation of all his spiritual enemies under the form of the Dragon was simply the natural habit of the Greek mind: the stories of Apollo delivering Latona from the Python, and of Perseus delivering Andromeda from the sea-monster, has been as familiar as the pitcher and wine cups they had been painted on, in red and black, for a thousand years before.”²

Darkness is a nameless horror, and although néon lights enable us sometimes to forget it, always it is there in the background. One of the most piercing cries in literature is ‘Telamonian Aias’ in the *Iliad*:

O Father Zeus, deliver
The sons of the Achaeans from this mist,
And make clear sky; give sight unto our eyes;
And then...destroy us, since it pleases thee,
So be it in the light!³

No wonder the imaginative Greeks made Powers and Personalities of natural phenomena, and rendered meteorological observations in terms of exciting drama. We may thus interpret the Andromeda myth either as a moral allegory of pride and retribution and redemption or as a naturalistic allegory of the eventual victory of the sun over the sea and its mists and its storms. When all explanations have been offered, the Andromeda-Perseus legend is by no means divested of its singular human relevance, and rather holds us for ever captive with the haunting moans and the magic alchemy that turns them into transcendent joy.

III

The ‘dark’ ages descended upon Europe, and the voice of the myths was stilled for the time being. But soon it was heard again, a little

¹ *Beowulf*, translated by C.G. Child, edn. of 1932, p. ix

² *The Works of John Ruskin*, ed. by Cook and Wedderburn, Vol. XXVII, p. 481

³ *The Iliad*, translated by Sir William Marris, Book XVII, p. 405

disguised may be,—perhaps also a little transformed. During the spacious days of Chivalry and the wonder-filled days of the Renaissance humanity wrote some of its most beautiful pages. The Greek and Roman myths were rediscovered, and were given glorious fresh apparel. But they were no more quite what once they had been in the great days of Periclean Athens, or even in the palmy days of Augustan Rome. Something apparently had gone out of them, never to return again. Cold reason and riotous romanticism alike jarred upon the music of the myths, and although poets and dramatists still made capital out of them, the potent old magic was to be recaptured no more.

The Andromeda myth too survived and eked out an uneasy life in casual references and allusions. And Corneille wrote his popular opera, *Andromeda*, and Charles Kingsley composed his long narrative poem on the same subject. Kingsley's *Andromeda* is important to the literary historian for a double reason: it is the only English poem on the Andromeda myth, and it is written in quantitative metre. In the words of Sri Aurobindo,

“Kingsley's *Andromeda*...is the most readable of English hexameter poems; the verse is well-constructed, much better than Clough's; it has not the sing-song tameness of Longfellow, there is rhythm, there is resonance. But though the frame is correct and very presentable, there is nothing or little inside it. Kingsley has the trick of romantic language, romantic imagination and thinking, but he is not an original poet; the poetic value of his work is far inferior to Clough's or Longfellow's, it is not sound and good stuff but romantic tinsel.”¹

Kingsley follows the main lines of the classical story, and the recital of events is easy and not unconvincing. We are first introduced to the “dark-haired Aethiop people” who dwell “over the sea, past Crete, on the Syrian shore to the southward”; the gods of Olympus are unknown to them, and they are “vexed with the earthquake, and flame, and the sea-floods, scourge of Poseidon”. The floods ravage their plains yearly, but now a still greater foe devours them day by day and gives them no peace:

a monster,
Bred of the slime, like the worms which are bred from the muds
of the Nile-bank,
Shapeless, a terror to see; and by night it swam out to the seaward,

¹ *Collected Poems and Plays*, Vol.II, p.356

Daily returning to feed with the dawn, and devoured of the fairest,
Cattle, and children, and maids, till the terrified people fled inland.¹

The danger of extermination looms near, immense; and the priests cast lots, Cassiopea makes her confession, and the dark-browed priests pronounce Andromeda's doom.

Bitter in soul they went out, Cepheus and Cassiopea,
Bitter in soul; and their hearts whirled round, as the leaves in the eddy.
Weak was the queen, and rebelled: but the king, like a shepherd of
people,
Willed not the land should waste; so he yielded the life of his daughter.²

And so Andromeda is chained to the rocks and is offered to the monster. Cassiopea begs forgiveness of her daughter, and departs in immitigable sorrow, leaving the maid alone in the darkness. Andromeda's utter hopelessness finds faint utterance at last:

Guiltless I am: why thus then? Are gods more ruthless than mortals?
Have they no mercy for youth? no love for the souls who have loved
them?...

O dread sea! false sea! I dreamed what I dreamed of thy goodness;
Dreamed of a smile in thy gleam, of a laugh in the splash of thy ripple:
False and devouring thou art, and the great world dark and spiteful.³

Kingsley doesn't hit it off, somehow; he no doubt strives with all his might, but it is clear the clue to the secret is not his, and he is only wildly beating the air. He summons to his aid much superfluous supernatural machinery—the choir of the mystical sea-maids, the tritons, the wantoning dolphins, and the sea-boys slain by the wrath of the sea. Sunrise too claims Kingsley's laborious attention for about twenty-five lines. Andromeda's apostrophe to the sun ought to be a torrential cry, and yet these whimpers are what Kingsley actually puts into her mouth:

but me—Oh spare me!
Spare me yet, ere he be here, fierce, tearing, unbearable! See me,

¹ Kingsley's *Andromeda*, II. 16-20

² *ibid.*, II. pp. 66-69

³ *ibid.*, II. pp. 113-4; 121-3

See me, how tender and soft, and thus helpless! See how I shudder,
Fancying only my doom...¹

What is wrong with these lines?—they aren't poetry, that's all. The description of the descent of Perseus is happier:

in the spray, like a hovering foam-bow,
Hung, more fair than the foam-bow, a boy in the bloom of his manhood,
Golden-haired, ivory-limbed, ambrosial; over his shoulder
Hung a veil of his beauty the gold-fringed folds of the goat-skin,
Bearing the brass of his shield, as the sun flashed clear on its clearness.²

Perseus' agonizing tête-à-tête with Andromeda is spun out at considerable length. Kingsley's Perseus too looks upon the chained Andromeda as a "prize", to be won and kept and worn. With the aid of Homeric similes Kingsley advances the action, his Perseus woos the chained Andromeda, kisses and clasps her, tears at the fetters that hold her, and releases her at last. The monster is now seen in the waters, and Andromeda sends out a despairing shriek. But Perseus only laughs, and his laughter echoes in the hills. To Andromeda's awed query "Art thou, too, then a god?",

"No god I", smiling he answered,
"Mortal as thou, yet divine: but mortal the herds of the ocean,
Equal to men in that only, and less in all else; for they nourish
Blindly the life of the lips, untaught by the gods, without wisdom:
Shame if I fled before such!"³

Andromeda now appeals to Perseus not to endanger his own life in a hopeless enterprise. The contrast between life and death is elaborated in the course of twenty-two lines, yet the words fail to bounce us, as do Claudio's in *Measure for Measure*,⁴ or even Rustum's to Sohrab:

the air of Heaven is soft,
And warm, and pleasant; but the grave is cold.
Heaven's air is better than the cold dead grave.⁵

¹ Kingsley's *Andromeda*, II. pp. 198-200

² *ibid.*, II, pp. 220-224

³ *ibid.*, II, pp. 313-315

⁴ Act III, Sc. I, II; pp. 116-130

⁵ Arnold, *Sohrab and Rustum*, II. pp. 322-325

Three things hold we, the Rulers, who sit by the founts of Olympus,
Wisdom, and prowess, and beauty; and freely we pour them on mortals;
Pleased at our image in man, as father at his in his children.
One thing only we grudge to mankind, when a hero, unthankful,
Boasts of our gifts as his own, stiffnecked, and dishonours the givers,
Turning our weapons against us. Him Ate follows avenging...¹

Courage I give thee; the heart of a queen, and the mind of Immortals,....
Chastely and wisely to govern thyself and thy house and thy people,
Bearing a god-like race to thy spouse, till dying I set thee
High for a star in the heavens, a sign and a hope to the seamen,
Spreading thy long white arms all night in the heights of the aether,
Hard by thy sire and the hero thy spouse, while near thee thy mother
Sits in her ivory chair, as she plaits ambrosial tresses.³

as the stars rang loud to her singing,
Chanting of order and right, and of foresight, warden of nations;
Chanting of labour and craft, and of wealth in the port and the garner;
Chanting of valour and fame, and the man who can fall with the
foremost,
Fighting for children and wife, and the field which his father
bequeathed him.
Sweetly and solemnly sang she, and planned new lessons for mortals:
Happy, who hearing obey her, the wise unsullied Athene.⁸

⁸ *ibid.*, II. pp. 484-490

That is the end of Kingsley's *Andromeda*. As Dr. Johnson might put it, none can wish the poem longer than it is. Kingsley omits the Phineus episode, and one need not regret it. The main defect of Kingsley's poem is that it is sustained neither by the stern tempo of the Heroic Age nor by the incandescent fervour of true Romance. It uneasily wavers between the two authentic poles, and gives us heroism that doesn't inspire and romance that doesn't transport. In a word, it is neither heroic nor human, neither an epic fragment nor a romantic poem.

IV

Kingsley, as ever meaning well, wished to give the Andromeda myth a modern—at least a 'Victorian'—habitation and a name; as a matter of fact, the myth in his hands became mere "romantic tinsel", a *reductio ad absurdum* of its potent Greek original. It was left to Sri Aurobindo to offer the modern world a vivid new rendering of the old myth, retaining all its old beauty and poetry and sense of mystery, but all served up with a modern flavour and relevance and urgency. *Perseus the Deliverer* originally appeared serially in the Weekly Edition of the *Bandemataram* a little over forty years ago,¹ and has been since reprinted, with minor changes and additions, in the first volume of *Collected Poems and Plays*. Written when he was about thirty, *Perseus the Deliverer* belongs to the early period of Sri Aurobindo's poetic activity, but it is even so a characteristically Aurobindonian concoction, rich in poetry, vivid and vivacious and forceful as drama, mature in thought, and prophetic in cast. In a prefatory note, Sri Aurobindo disarmingly explains the general scope, and catalogues the tantalizing features, of his blank verse five-act play:

"In this piece the ancient legend has been divested of its original character of a heroic myth; it is made the nucleus round which there could grow the scenes of a romantic story of human temperament and life-impulses on the Elizabethan model... Time there is more than Einsteinian in its relativity, the creative imagination is its sole disposer and arranger; fantasy reigns sovereign; the names of ancient countries and peoples are brought in only as fringes of a decorative background; anachronisms romp in wherever they can get an easy admittance, ideas and associations from all climes and epochs mingle; myth, romance and

¹ June 30, 1907 to October 13, 1907

realism make up a single whole. For here the stage is the human mind of all times....."¹

Greek myth, renascent wonder and worship of variegated life, modern science and the spiral of ascending self-consciousness, all fuse in Sri Aurobindo's *Perseus the Deliverer* to give us a well-knit play which is at once poetry and drama, philosophy and prophecy.

In Greek mythology, Poseidon and his salt-water empire are generally contrasted with Zeus, his elder brother, and his far-flung bright domains. There can be no doubt about Poseidon's reserves of power, but he "uniformly appears in myth as a god of little intellectual and still less ethical character".² Pallas Athene, on the other hand, is both clever and crafty, a loyal friend and also an implacable foe. Although Poseidon and Athene both aid the Greeks in their war against the Trojans, there is in fact little love lost between them. In the curious contest between them for the land of Attica, Poseidon produces a horse and Athene an olive-tree, and as the inhabitants vote for the latter, Poseidon has to yield Attica to Athene. Again, while Poseidon is dead set against Odysseus, Athene is his unfailing helper, and by dint of sheer perseverance and much wire-pulling she encompasses his ultimate return to Ithaca and reunion with Telemachus and Penelope. In the Greek versions of the Andromeda story, the main struggle is really between Perseus and the sea-monster, although Athene and Poseidon also are ultimately involved in the conflict. But the issue is not forced, and no moral is drawn from Perseus' victory over the sea-monster. There is a sense of relief that Andromeda has been saved, that's about all. Ovid likewise visualizes the conflict only on the human plane, and hardly suggests any other. Kingsley indeed contrasts the "pitiless sea-gods" with the "Lords of Olympus", but he doesn't properly work out the implications of the contrast and all is submerged in a mass of pretty sentiment and verbal surplusage. It has been left to Sri Aurobindo to insinuate through the terrestrial drama of Andromeda and Perseus and Polydaon and the sea-monster the invisible cosmic struggle between the powers of Light and the blind nether forces, and through this interlinked struggle in the two planes of reality to suggest as well the dynamics of zigzag Progress.

In the Prologue there is a significant verbal passage at arms between Athene and Poseidon: thus Athene—

Me the Omnipotent
Made from His being to lead and discipline

¹ *Collected Poems and Plays*, Vol. I, pp. 174-175

² *Mythology of All Races*, Vol. I, p. 213

The immortal spirit of man, till he attain
To order and magnificent mastery
Of all his outward world.¹

But Poseidon is not likely to be so easily cowed down by Athene's aggressive vaunt, nor by her appointed mission; and he bluntly tells her that man's feeble feet may not dare the anarchy of his enormous seas. Athene now charges aggression with yet more force, and hurls her gauntlet on man's behalf:

I bid thee not,
O azure strong Poseidon, to abate
Thy savage tumults: rather his march oppose.
For through the shocks of difficulty and death
Man shall attain his godhead.²

She is even prepared to lead the resistance to Poseidon's billows with her own great aegis, and sure she will drive his waters from the world and leave him "naked to the light". But Poseidon, piqued though he is, will not fight Athene. It is therefore agreed that the issue should be decided, as once before their rival claims to Attica were decided, in a less direct manner. She will send forth her champion, Perseus, and Poseidon will be represented by his sea-monster. The issue of the cosmic conflict between Poseidon and Athene—between reaction and progress, between primitive violence and bright humanism—is really to be decided on the shores of Syria; and a strictly localized struggle between sundry human beings is to be thus invested with a cosmic significance. And so the centre of gravity shall shift from the vast spaces of heaven and the wide womb of Night and seek its destination on the earth. The future shall lie with limited imperfect earth and its puny inhabitant, man. He may therefore very well cast this defiance at the devouring and thundering sea:

Yes, thou great sea,
I am more mighty and outbillow thee.
On thy tops I rise;
'Tis an excuse to dally with the skies.
I sink below
The bottom of the clamorous world to know.

¹ *Collected Poems and Plays*, Vol. I, p. 178

² *ibid.*, p. 179

On the safe land
 To linger is to lose what God has planned
 For man's wide soul,
 Who set eternal godhead for its goal.
 Therefore he arrayed
 Danger and difficulty like seas and made
 Pain and defeat,
 And put His giant snares around our feet.¹

And likewise earnest earth may fittingly articulate the aim of its great evolutionary endeavour:

I, Earth, have a deeper power than Heaven;
 My lonely sorrow surpasses its rose-joys,
 A red and bitter seed of the raptures seven;—
 My dumbness fills with echoes of a far Voice.

By me the last finite, yearning, strives
 To reach the last infinity's unknown,
 The Eternal is broken into fleeting lives
 And Godhead pent in the mire and the stone.²

There is no doubt that Sri Aurobindo's *Perseus the Deliverer* is a convincing rendering of these prophetic intimations of the earth's great future and of man's great evolutionary destiny. The play may be read and enjoyed as drama and as poetry, but that is no reason why we should deliberately miss its meaning and its tenor of prophecy.

Act I constitutes the 'exposition'. It introduces us to the principal characters, explains their inter-relations, and insinuates the enveloping atmosphere. "A rocky and surf-beat margin of land walled in with great frowning cliffs"³—and at once we are in a unique spot, unknown to the Geographer, yet henceforth for ever familiar to us. The play opens in prose, and gets going with apparently light bantering steps. Cireas, the temple-servant, and Diomedes, the slave-girl, chafe one another, and as it were talk with

¹ *Collected Poems and Plays*, Vol. I, pp. 130-131

² *ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 284

³ *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 183

their tongues in their cheeks. There is, however, a touch of irony when Cireas says:

“But these Gods are kittle cattle to joke with. They have too many spare monsters about in their stables trained to snap up offenders for a light breakfast.”¹

Coming events cast their shadows before! There is talk of human sacrifices, and there is also a reference to the palace rumour that King Phineus of Tyre is to marry Princess Andromeda of Syria. There is a sharp cry, and prose of a sudden turns to blank verse—and there is a nameless tension that grips you like a vice. Cireas climbs up a rock and tells Diomedes that a Phoenician galley has been wrecked—and so “here’s fresh meat for hungry grim Poseidon”.² The stage clears for a little while, and—we are in the second scene—Perseus “descends on winged sandals from the clouds”, apostrophizes “many-thundered enormous Ocean” and “mother Earth”, and, catching sight of the wrecked galley, exclaims:

You are grown dear to me,
You smiling weeping human faces, brightly
Who move, who live, not like those stony masks
And Gorgon visions of that monstrous world
Beyond the rivers.”³

Perseus rescues from the wreck two merchants, Tyrnaus and Smerdas, who offer a striking study in contrast. Tyrnaus bears his sorrows with a commendable dignity, while Smerdas whines and whimpers in the most contemptible manner. Presently Iolaus, Prince of Syria, followed by soldiers, surrounds Perseus and the merchants, and Iolaus hesitates whether or not to “spare” Perseus. He is struck by the beauty of the stranger with the sandals, and gives the order that the “young sun-god” shall live. Polydaon, priest of Poseidon’s Temple, accompanied by King Phineus, now enters upon the scene. It is clear they are in league together against Iolaus, but as the soldiers advance to seize Perseus and Iolaus, a sudden glory bursts forth—it is but Perseus’ uncovered shield—and the soldiers withdraw in discomfiture. Polydaon himself is for the time being dazed to his roots, and persuades Phineus to withdraw. Perseus and Iolaus part as friends—

¹ *Collected Poems and Plays*, Vol. I. p. 184

² *ibid.*, p. 185

³ *ibid.*, p. 187

Perseus being directed to a neighbouring village, Iolaus returning to the Palace.

The scene now shifts to a room in the woman's apartments in the Palace of the Syrian King, Cepheus. We hear some political palace chatter between Praxilla, the head of the household, and Diomede, who has returned from the shore, having witnessed the wreck, sungod Perseus' arrival, and Polydaon's rebuff. Andromeda enters, and her wonder-filled speech takes their breath away:

The sun had risen in my dreams...
 I dreamed my sun had risen.
 He had a face like the Olympian Zeus
 And wings upon his feet. He smiled upon me...
 My sun was a bright god and bore a flaming word
 To kill all monsters.¹

Diomede is struck by the strange coincidence—Andromeda had but dreamed of what had actually happened! Expatiating on the coincidence, Diomede describes the wreck and the imminent sacrifice. Andromeda's reactions are not unlike Miranda's in *The Tempest*:

O! I have suffer'd
 With those that I saw suffer...
 . . . Poor souls, they perish'd.
 Had I been any god of power, I would
 Have sunk the sea within the earth, or e'er
 It should the good ship so have swallow'd and
 The fraughting souls within her."²

The edge of Andromeda's agony is even sharper, for she knows that her accursed countrymen saved from the wreck are sacrificed to Poseidon. Syrian or no, every man is her brother, and all sorrow is painful. Diomede's recital of the unusual happenings on the shore raises conflicting emotions in Andromeda's heart. It is clear she loves her brother and hates Phineus, and she pities "men who are weak and beasts that suffer" with a pity that but seems childish blasphemy to worldly-wise women like Praxilla. Two unhappy men will be sacrificed to dread Poseidon—"their living hearts

¹ *Collected Poems and Plays*, Vol. I, pp. 196-197

² Act I, Scene II, ll. pp. 5-6; 9-13

ripped from their blood-choked breasts to feed his hunger.”¹ Andromeda, unable to persuade her brother to save these condemned men, declares that she will herself save them. A messenger now summons Iolaus to the audience-chamber to meet Polydaon’s accusation. Praxilla concludes the scene (and the first Act) with the words:

What may not happen? The priest is dangerous,
Poseidon may be angry...²

The ‘exposition’ is now over. The germs of the ‘conflict’ to come have already been indicated. In the background, the powers of Reaction and Progress, Order and Chaos, Light and Darkness, have deliberately joined issue, and Poseidon and Pallas Athene have agreed to fight the matter out through their chosen representatives. Polydaon is a prepotent sinister figure even in the first Act. Behind him apparently are the soldiers, the scheming mind of King Phineus, the blood-boltered tradition of all the yesterdays, and, of course, the obscure engines of Poseidon’s power. Perseus himself—although he calls it “an evil and harsh religion”—will not meddle with the intended sacrifice. Iolaus has but done his duty as a soldier, and can do nothing to save Tyrnaus and Smerdas. And yet this mere girl will defy Poseidon and his priest, the tradition of ages and the laws of the land, and “save” the intended victims! Paramount in Andromeda’s eyes are the laws of humanity and pity—and these only she will acknowledge, and these alone shall guide her actions. Sri Aurobindo’s Andromeda is a creature cast in the mould of Antigone, who dared to defy King Kreon’s might rather than submit to outrageous injustice, and is thus very different from the traditional Andromeda who is more akin to Iphigenia, the innocent maiden who was sacrificed by Agamemnon to propitiate Artemis. In *Perseus the Deliverer* the kernel of the action lies, not in Andromeda’s passive sufferance as in the earlier renderings of the myth, but in her active defiance of the powers of Evil.

VI

In Act II we watch passions as they spin the plot, and diplomacy as it sniggers and sneaks. Cepheus and Cassiopea, his Queen, have but one thought in their minds—to save Iolaus. Even as he enters the King’s

¹ *Collected Poems and Plays*, Vol. I, pp. 203-204

² *ibid.*, p. 205

audience-chamber, Polydaon is twisted with fanatic hate, and boils over rather than talks:

Shall I have justice? Wilt thou be the King
Over a peopled country? or must I loose
The snake-haired Gorgon-eyed Erinnyes
To hunt thee with the clamorous whips of Hell
Blood-dripping? ¹

Cepheus and Cassiopea offer opulent riches, place, honour, what he will, to Polydaon, if only he will spare Iolaus. All in vain. Polydaon is obdurate. Unable to stand his insolence any longer, Cassiopea bursts out at last:

Thou hopest in thy sacerdotal pride
To make the Kings of Syria childless, end
A line that started from the gods. Think'st thou
It will be tamely suffered? What have we
To lose, if we lose this? ²

Polydaon is taken aback, and agrees to accept riches and honours in exchange for Iolaus' life. Phineus certainly doesn't relish this unexpected development—he had counted upon Iolaus' death too securely. Iolaus repels the charges against him, and it is at last agreed that he should produce the bright stranger within three days to stand his "trial" before the King. There are recriminations between the two arch-plotters, Phineus and Polydaon, and each thinks that the other has blundered. They are villains both, and there is a sardonic variety even in their villainy. Polydaon is seemingly unafraid of the power of mere men, but Perseus is a problem—what if he were really a god? And Polydaon believes in gods. As for Phineus, his parting advice to Polydaon is characteristic of the man:

The old way's best;
Excite the commons, woo their thunderer,
That plausible republican. Iolaus
Once ended, by right of fair Andromeda
I'll save and wear the crown. Priest, over Syria
And all my Tyrians thou shalt be the one prelate,
Should all go well.³

¹ *Collected Poems and Plays*, Vol. I, p. 207

² *ibid.*, p. 209

³ *ibid.*, p. 215

In Act III, Scene 1, Andromeda braces herself for the great dividing moment of her life when her shoreless compassion shall issue in defiant, self-determined action. She is not to be shaken from her resolution by the girlish pleadings of Diomedes. As Andromeda saunters forth on her momentous enterprise, Athene reveals herself to her and applauds her mission. When Andromeda says, "I help myself when I help these", Athene answers:

To thee alone I gave
This knowledge...
But dost thou know that thy reward shall be
Betrayal and fierce hatred?

Nothing daunted, Andromeda returns:

My reward shall be
To cool this anguish of pity in my heart
And be at peace: if dead, O still at peace! ¹

Athene gives her the assurance that, however gods and men may hate her, she, Athene, will love her as her own child. And so Andromeda, accompanied by Diomedes, proceeds to Poseidon's Temple.

The next scene is the central scene of the play—spiritually, logically, and structurally. The spirit of rebellion is abroad, and Poseidon's terrestrial empire is in imminent danger of disintegration. First the temple servant, Cireas, declares that he will have nothing more to do with Poseidon the man-slayer, ship-breaker, and earth-shaker. Presently Perseus and Iolaus bribe Cireas to bring forth Tyrnaus and Smerdas. Tyrnaus is resigned to his fate:

Fate gives me
This tragic, not inglorious death: I am
The banquet of a god. It fits, it fits,
And I repine not. ²

Perseus admires his equanimity, and shears his chains with a flourish of his sword. But Smerdas, base whining Smerdas,—him Perseus will not

¹ *Collected Poems and Plays*, Vol. I, pp. 218-219

² *ibid.*, p. 223

save. Iolaus, Perseus and Tyrnaus retreat into the dim obscurity of the Temple as Andromeda and Diomedes advance towards the chained Smerdas. Andromeda will save Smerdas—even Smerdas:

Alas, poor human man!
 Why, we have all so many sins to answer,
 It would be hard to have cold justice dealt us.
 . . . Is't not enough
 To see a face in tears and heal the sorrow,
 Or must we weigh whether the face is fair
 Or ugly? ¹

Tyrnaus is overwhelmed by Andromeda's boundless pity and her brave immaculate deed, and he waxes poetic and prophetic:

O surely in these regions
 Where thou wert born, pure-eyed Andromeda,
 There shall be some divine epiphany
 Of calm sweet-hearted pity for the world,
 And harsher gods shall fade into their Hades. ²

The freeing of Smerdas by Andromeda is the acme of the movement of rebellion against Poseidon's sovereignty. Andromeda, alone in Poseidon's Temple, taunts the dark god to do his worst:

I hate, condemn, defy thee.
 I am no more than a brief living woman,
 Yet am I more divine than thou, for I
 Can pity." ³

Andromeda hurriedly returns to the Palace. Perseus, already deeply in love with Iolaus' "rosy sister", declares that she alone is his destined wife. Iolaus, struck with wonder by the sheer audacity of her sister's deed, muses significantly:

This was Andromeda and not Andromeda,
 I never saw her woman till this hour. ⁴

¹ *Collected Poems and Plays*, Vol. I, pp. 226-227

² *ibid.*, p. 228

³ *ibid.*, p. 229

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 229

But the immediate future is dim—and Polydaon's wrath is fearful. Perseus reassures Iolaus:

I think not quite at random
 Athene led me to these happy shores
 That bore such beautiful twin heads for me
 Sun-curled, Andromeda and Iolaus,
 That I might see their beauty marred with death
 By cunning priests and blood-stained gods. Fear not
 The event. I bear Athene's sword of sharpness.¹

In due course Polydaon discovers the escape of the intended victims. Cireas is nowhere to be seen. Polydaon grows daemonic, sounds the emergent gong, and invokes Poseidon. The latter, glowing like burning coal in the darkness, demands his victims, accuses Polydaon of scheming for his own petty mortal aims, and pronounces the doom of Syria:

The pleasant land of Syria
 Shall be dispeopled. Wolves shall howl in Damascus,
 And Gaza and Euphrates bound a desert.
 My resonant and cliff-o'ervaulting seas,
 Black-cowled, with foaming tops thundering shall climb
 Into your lofty seats of ease and wash them
 Strangled into the valleys.....²

But, if only Polydaon will abandon his sordid aims, Poseidon will yet inhabit his heart and give him power and glory. Roused by the ominous gong, first Phineus and his men, then Cepheus and his soldiers, and many Syrians as well, all rush to the Temple. Cepheus orders Dercetes to scour all Syria for the fugitives, but Polydaon cries and groans, as if the god rent him in two. The assembled rabble of Syrians salute Polydaon as their king and promise to do his bidding. Polydaon commands that Cassiopea and Andromeda shall be brought to the Temple. Cepheus and even Phineus are scandalized, and Phineus speaks out:

Refrain thyself from impious deeds, or else
 A hundred Tyrian blades shall search thy brain
 To look for thy lost reason.³

¹ *Collected Poems and Plays*, Vol. I, p. 229

² *ibid.*, p. 232

³ *ibid.*, p. 235

Meanwhile Dercetes returns with Smerdas, and cross-examined he confesses at last that "the fair child princess Andromeda" had rescued him. It is to his credit—it is but infinitesimal credit though—that Smerdas betrays Andromeda but unwillingly, under pressure of "hard necessity".

Cassiopea and Andromeda now enter the Temple, under the protection of Nebassar and the Chaldean Guard. Polydaon demands his victims, Andromeda above all. And Andromeda will not deny her deed:

I am capable of pain and so can feel
The pain of others! For which if you I love
Must kill me, do it. I alone am guilty.¹

Cassiopea decides to withdraw with her husband and daughter to the Palace. In vain Polydaon urges Dercetes and the Syrians against Nebassar and the Chaldean Guard. Phineus, made uneasy by Polydaon's fanataic fury, dissociates from him and decides to work for his sole hand in his own way. Polydaon, alone in the temple, communes with Poseidon—then raises his head:

Tomorrow, Syrian? tomorrow is Poseidon's.²

VII

The first scene in Act V is an interesting study in mob fury and mob psychology. Poseidon-Polydaon's star is clearly on the ascendent. The sea-monster rages and belches fire and seizes the Syrians right and left. Men, women, and children are flying helter-skelter in unutterable panic. It is the very situation that a demagogue like Therops and a citizen-butcher like Perissus can exploit to the full. The Assyrians from three points are advancing against Syria, and the sea-monster from the fourth quarter is ravaging the country. Down with Cepheus, and his regime! Down with Cassiopea, and her Chaldean Guard! Therops is in his element, his periods roll one after another, his casuistry disarms the mob—and they cry, "you shall be our king!" Where treason is the law, dissent becomes treason—and so it is with Chabrias whom sorrow hasn't unhinged. The appearance of Polydaon acts as oil to fire, and mob fury blazes sky high. The mob, led by Polydaon and Therops, surges towards the Palace, hysterically

¹ *Collected Poems and Plays*, Vol. I, p. 240

² *ibid.*, p. 242

crying: "To the palace, to the palace! We'll kill the Chaldeans, strangle Cepheus, tear the Queen to pieces."¹

With the next scene we are transported to Cydone's garden, where her lover, Iolaus, and his friend, Perseus, are spending a quiet time. Perseus feels the stir of something big within,

as if great things
Were now in motion and clear-eyed Athene
Urging me on to high and helpful deeds.
There is a grandiose tumult in the air,
A voice of gods and Titans locked in wrestle.²

Diomedes bursts into their company and tells them the latest news: the sea-monster's unbelievable career—mob fury and violence, and the march on the Palace—danger to Andromeda, Iolaus, and their parents! Iolaus is urged to fly—fly far away—and save his own life at least. Iolaus, however, starts to go to the Palace to rescue his sister and his parents. Perseus is ready for the fray, for he knows that great deeds must be done before the end of the day:

I have arisen and all your turbulent Syria
Shall know me for the son of Zeus...
A presence sits within my heart that sees
Each moment's need and finds the road to meet it.
Dread nothing...³

Meanwhile, in the outer Court of the Palace, Nebassar and Praxilla spend anxious moments. The maddened mob is avalanching towards the Palace, and Nebassar's brows are clouded with care. Cassiopea and Cepheus enter, and now, as ever, Cassiopea is more clearly mistress of the situation than Cepheus is master. He gives vent to self-pity and self-laceration. Cassiopea, however, finds apter words to describe the crisis:

A screened Necessity drives even the gods.
Over human lives it strides to unseen ends:
Our tragic failures are its stepping-stones."⁴

¹ *Collected Poems and Plays*, Vol. I, p. 248

² *ibid.*, p. 250

³ *ibid.*, p. 252

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 256

The time for calm discussion is past, the crowds storm through the gates, Therops takes on himself the "majesty of the offended people", Polydaon assumes Poseidon's crown, and literally hell is let loose. As Andromeda shows herself to the people, the women cry:

Throw her to us! throw her to us! We will pick
The veins out of her body one by one.¹

The curses of the women, the very women she has held so dear, unnerve even Andromeda. The two Syrian women, Baltis and Pasithea, are one more study in contrast. To Baltis, Andromeda is "the child of wickedness" who should be torn to bits; to Pasithea, who has lost her daughter to the sea-monster, Andromeda is like her own child and deserves no hurt. Nebassar is about to use force against the mob, when Polydaon proposes that Cepheus and Cassiopea may yet be saved, if only Andromeda is offered to Poseidon. Nebassar falls into the trap, agrees to the lives of Cepheus and Cassiopea being spared in exchange for Andromeda's, and leads King and Queen into the Palace. The mob hurls foul execrations on Andromeda's head, and even tub-thumper Therops is touched:

She droops like a bruised flower beneath their curses,
And the tears lace her poor pale cheeks like frost,
Glittering on snow-drops. I am sorry now
I had a hand in this.²

Therops and Perissus the butcher shield her from mob violence, and she is chained and hurried to the rocks. Andromeda now safe in his clutches, Polydaon orders a general offensive against the Palace. Therops reminds him of his compact with Nebassar, but to no purpose. Polydaon's blood-lust alarms Therops, and he is apprehensive about the future. As for Polydaon, this is his hour of glory, his egotism inflates him to global proportions, and mad and wicked at once he tears passion to tatters, gesticulates wildly, and screams rather than speaks:

The world shall long recall King Polydaon.
I will paint Syria gloriously with blood.
Hundreds shall daily die to incarnadine

¹ *Collected Poems and Plays*, Vol. I, p 259

² *ibid.*, p. 263

The streets of my city and my palace floors,
 For I would walk in redness. I'll plant my gardens
 With heads instead of lilacs. Hecatombs
 Of men shall groan their hearts out for my pleasure
 In crimson rivers.....
 I am athirst, magnificently athirst,
 And for a red and godlike wine...
 I am a god, a mighty dreadful god,
 The multitudinous mover in the sea,
 The shaker of the earth: I am Poseidon
 And I will walk in three tremendous spaces
 Climbing the mountains with my clamorous waters
 And see my dogs eat up Andromeda...¹

Polydaon's scarlet fury is the radiance of cosmic evil, his insatiable demon-thirst is the effervescence of evil in its fell last ditch. He is fearful and terrible and immense in this scene—but he shall be so no longer.

Two brief scenes conclude the Act. Phineus plans to ambush the Syrians and rescue Andromeda. Securing her, he hopes ultimately to secure also Syria's crown. But Andromeda will not owe her safety to him. She prefers "death's grim embrace" to Phineus' hand and the Tyrian crown. And so she is led to the rocks, after all. "Dishevelled, bare-armed and unsandalled, stripped of all but a single light robe",² Andromeda stands on a ledge under a jutting rock, the sea washing below her feet. Her arms are stretched at full length, and she is chained by her wrists and ankles. Polydaon surveys the scene with fanatic satisfaction, and with the Syrians furiously yelling around him proceeds to the temple to tackle Iolaus, Cepheus and Cassiopea.

VIII

The fifth Act of *Perseus the Deliverer* comprehends the whole of a classical tragedy like Euripides' *Andromeda*—and yet Sri Aurobindo's play, taken as a whole, is close-knit enough, and may be said to preserve the "unities". Act V, Scene I, opens with Andromeda's dignified lament and brave heart-searching:

O iron-throated vast unpitying sea,
 Whose borders touch my feet with their cold kisses

¹ *Collected Poems and Plays*, Vol. I, pp. 266-267

² *ibid.*, p. 271

As if they loved me! yet from thee my death
 Will soon arise.....I have failed
 In all I did and die accursed and hated...
 Yet I repent not. O thou dreadful god!
 Yes, thou art dreadful and most mighty; perhaps
 This world will always be a world of blood.....¹

And must she die? "Life was recently so beautiful"—and must she die indeed? Cydone comes to comfort Andromeda, and tells her they will all be saved. Cydone then returns to the Temple to keep Iolaus company. Andromeda is soon startled by the sight of the monster, rearing its head above the waves. Perseus descends upon the scene and tells her that he will save her, "sole jewel of the world". Andromeda, dazed and delighted, pleads with him:

O touch me ere you go that I may feel
 You are real.

And Perseus needs no prompting:

Let my kiss sweet doubting dreamer,
 Convince thee.²

We now see the grim struggle between Perseus and the monster through the eager, agitated, enraptured eyes of Andromeda; and, after all, that is as it should be. Andromeda follows the vicissitudes of the grapple, now prays, now exults, now hardly can contain herself, and is at last relieved — so relieved!—to see the monster tossed there "inertly on the flood a floating mountain". Perseus returns triumphant, undoes the chains, and takes his guerdon. Andromeda is happy, but she does not forget her brother, and her parents. Perseus lifts her in his arms, sweeps through the air, and careers towards Poseidon's Temple.

Scene II takes us back to Poseidon's Temple. Polydaon gloats over his triumph and taunts Cassiopia, but the taunts return to him in double-quick time. Perissus, who has witnessed the miracle of the sea-monster's destruction and Andromeda's deliverance, returns excited, gives equivocal answers to Polydaon's questions, and so leaves him yet a little longer in his self-

¹ *Collected Poems and Plays*, Vol. I, p. 273

² *ibid.*, p. 277

delusion. Perseus and Andromeda arrive in due course to the no small astonishment of the company. Cepheus and Cassiopea are transported with joy, and they can hardly believe the evidence of their senses. Discomfiture seizes Polydaon. His orders fall on empty ears. Perseus' long recital of his antecedents and the glittering budget of his victories take the company by storm:

I have dashed back the leaping angry waters;
His Ocean-force has yielded to a mortal.
Even while I speak, the world has changed around you.
Syrians, the earth is calm, the heavens smile;
A mighty silence listens on the sea.
All this I have done, and yet not I, but one greater,
Such is Athene's might, and theirs who serve her...'¹

After such a speech and after receiving the impact of such a radiance, none is foolish enough to demand a victim for Poseidon. Iolaus recommends a free pardon to all rebels except the "one guiltiest head", and Cepheus approves the sentence.

Polydaon's head whirls. How can it have happened? Why has Poseidon mutely suffered this humiliation? No, no, it cannot be. He will make one more effort to retrieve the position:

Quake, earth! rise, my great Ocean!
Earth, shake my foemen from thy back! clasp, sea,
And kiss them dead, thou huge voluptuary.
Come barking from your stables, my sweet monsters...²

No, it is no use; all is silent as the grave; Polydaon is finished, he falls to the ground. A little while, and he was all-powerful; a little while, and he is absurdly impotent, a simulacrum of his earlier self. He sees things more clearly—too late. His own sin and false ambition have derailed him into the pit. And—wonder of wonders—Poseidon himself has undergone a singular sea-change, his mystic trident burns tranquilly, and heaven seems to mirror his purple greatness. Ugly Hell gapes before Polydaon, fire-pointed knives seem to touch his heart; and, groaning and praying, he

¹ *Collected Poems and Plays*, Vol. I, p. 286

² *ibid.*, p. 288

crumples up dead. Perseus reads the appropriate funeral service;

This man for a few hours became the vessel
Of an occult and formidable Force
And through his form it did fierce terrible things
Unhuman: but dark heart could not contain the Force.
It turned in him to madness and demoniac
Huge longings. Then the Power withdrew from him
Leaving the broken incapable instrument,
And all its might was split from his body.¹

Parashurama was an *avatār* of God. He was for a period of time the vessel of the immortal Spirit. He encountered Rama, Dasaratha's son, at last. The Spirit withdrew from Parashurama and inhabited the younger vessel. It was now Rama's destiny to fulfil the far aims of the Spirit. Here too—though the parallel need not be pushed too far—the eclipse of Polydaon is inevitable to the dynamics of purposive Change.

Phineus has the last scene to himself. All is quiet in Syrian politics. Therops turns an ultra-loyalist, Perissus follows suit, and Andromeda and Cydone are soon to be married to Perseus and Iolaus. News comes that Phineus is in arms. In Sri Aurobindo's play, Phineus is not Cepheus' brother (as in earlier versions of the story), but only the careerist King of Tyre. Phineus now claims Andromeda's hand by right of "precontract". The issue has to be decided by recourse to arms, and Perseus makes quick work of Phineus and his men by directing Medusa's stare at them. As Dercetes describes it—

Astonishment

For two brief moments only held me close;
But when I lifted my sealed lids, the court
Was full of those swift charging warriors stiffened
To stone or stiffening, in the very posture
Of onset, sword uplifted, shield advanced,
Knee crooked, foot carried forward to the pace,
An animated silence, life in stone.²

All's well that ends well. The age of Polydaon is dead, a new fair age, mild and merciful, is born in its place. Zeus and Athene wrest primacy from

¹ *Collected Poems and Plays*, Vol. I, pp. 290-291

² *ibid.*, p. 303

Poseidon,—and Poseidon himself secures a seat at an Olympian height. The future is, however, with man, for man may rise high and draw his being close to the gods. And yet man's progress is no easy straight-line affair: but, however distant, however strewn with shocks and traps, there surely at the end of the road is the promised goal, and man shall one day reach it:

The day shall come when men feel close and one.
 Meanwhile one forward step is something gained,
 Since little by little earth must open to heaven
 Till her dim soul awakes into the light.¹

IX

Perseus the Deliverer, seen from one angle, is a belated "Elizabethan" play, full of the rush and tumult of super-abundant life, full of humour and beauty and vitality. Seen from another angle, it is a fresh rendering of the Andromeda myth, stressing the laws and facts of evolution. Two extracts from Sri Aurobindo's letters will clarify the position:

"Evolution takes place on the earth and therefore the earth is the proper field for progression. The beings of the other worlds do not progress from one world to another. They remain fixed to their own type."²

"The great Gods belong to the Overmind plane; in the Supermind they are unified as aspects of the Divine, in the Overmind they appear as separate personalities. Any godhead can descend by emanation to the physical plane and associate himself with the evolution of a human being with whose line of manifestation he is in affinity."³

There is thus little absurdity in Poseidon identifying himself for a while with Polydaon, or in Athene identifying herself with Perseus and Andromeda, or yet in Poseidon, Athene and Zeus appearing as separate divinities and even working at cross purposes. When one at last closes *Perseus the Deliverer*, one carries in one's memory the imprint of many striking gestures and many richly human faces, but one stands out especially rich and radiant,—sun-curved Andromeda defying man and god alike, and releasing Chaldean

¹ *Collected Poems and Plays*, Vol. I, p. 306

² *Letters of Sri Aurobindo*, p. 31

³ *Ibid.*, p. 37

Smerdas. After undergoing diverting vicissitudes down the corridors of Time, the Andromeda myth is alive again, and is here rendered anew with a wealth of Elizabethan elaboration, with ascending stairs of significance, with compelling prophetic fervour. Pity is nobler than revenge, charity is diviner than justice. The ascent of Consciousness is no rocket-soaring feat, it is an arduous zigzag affair. Evolution marks her periodical triumphs and advances by firmly stepping on and transcending the jutting rocks of failure and frustration. When man or beast turns irremediably evil, or stupendously futile, it must become extinct, even as the mammoths of old have become extinct. This is, perhaps, the inner meaning of the Medusa stare. Power in the person of Perseus and Pity in Andromeda's make the ideal combination that alone can realize, here and now, a "young uplifted race" that is human, humane, wise, and happy.

Savitri

BY SRI KRISHNAPREM

SRI Aurobindo's achievement in this great poem is one of which it is not easy for us to grasp the full significance. It is not a mythological poem, an ancient myth—as often as not even believed—used as a back-cloth against which to display poetic virtuosity. Neither is it a philosophical poem, an exposition in verse of doctrines whose more natural vehicle would be prose. Nor, again, is it mere literature, to be evaluated according to the canons of traditional, or even modern, English poetry. Indeed one remembers Sri Aurobindo's explicit rejection of certain criticisms—not of this poem—made by the Irish poet A.E.* The English language has been given to the world and its usages and limits can now no longer be determined exclusively by the ears of the islanders whose tongue it originally was. Those who would remain sole rulers of their language must abjure empire. But to return:

The uniqueness of the achievement lies in the fact that Sri Aurobindo has closed a gulf that has yawned in the human psyche for many many centuries. In the ancient world, poetry, whether in Vedic hymns or elsewhere, was—above all—revelation. Its subject matter was the eternal

* A.E. wrote in a letter to Sri Dilip Kumar Roy (dated 6.1.32): "English is a great language but it has very few words relating to spiritual ideas. For example, the word 'Karma' in Sanskrit embodies a philosophy. There is no word in English embodying the same idea. There are many words in Sanskrit charged with meanings which have no counterpart in English—words like *dhyāni*, *sushupti*, *turiya*—and I am sure the language which the Hindus speak today must be richer in words fitting for spiritual expression than English, in which there are few luminous words that can be used when there is a spiritual emotion to be expressed. I found this difficulty myself of finding a vocabulary though English is the language I heard about my cradle." To this Sri Aurobindo replied in a letter:

..."but this seems to me a reasoning from the conventions of a past order which cannot apply to a new poetry dealing with spiritual things. A new art of words written from a new consciousness demands a new technique... Truth first—a technique expressive of the truth in the forms of beauty *has* to be found if it does not exist. It is no use arguing from the spiritual inadequacy of the English language: it has to be made adequate. It has been plastic enough in the past to succeed in expressing all that it was asked to express, however new: it must now be urged to a farther new progress." (A.E. referred to some poems of Sri K.D. Sethna sent to him for opinion by Sri Dilip Kumar Roy.)

truth which dwells in the heart of all life. Of that secret 'Truth-consciousness'—to use Sri Aurobindo's own terms—poetry was the essential expression: the poet was the seer, not in some mild Wordsworthian sense, but in the full and ancient meaning of the word. He *saw* in very actuality the ever-living Gods who from within ruled and still rule all life and he used all the magic of the divine Logos to weave garments of sound in which those powers could dwell, as it were, embodied. He was the Seer, the Prophet, the Magician and his speech was mantra and enchantment, not only in India but throughout the world. It was a dim memory of this that remained in the medieval European tradition of Virgil as the great Enchanter.

But this of which we speak was in that archaic world when men were still embedded in the matrix of the universal life—in touch with Gods above and beasts below—the days before the rise of tyrannous, self-conscious, separative mind, that "slayer of the Real." Gradually, with the rise of this self-arrogating power a separation came about. One became two and head sundered itself from heart, knowledge from feeling. For itself the head forged the new tool of prose with which to express what it termed the facts of life, while to the more conservative heart was relegated whatever was left of the old magic language, shorn indeed of its prestige and power, but still possessing the glamour which clings to the language of an old but conquered race. Poetry thus became the language of the dispossessed heart, the vehicle of its dreams and misty unfulfilled longings, a glowing many-coloured rainbow arched over the rushing waters of life but existing—as the analytic head is careful to tell us—only in the eye of the beholder.

Perhaps the last great western poet to have made any real attempt to grasp the inner unity was Dante, and even he made use of merely traditional myth—and somewhat degenerated myth at that—for most of his structure, while Milton who came later used even more degenerated myth for purposes which it is not unfair to describe as theological apologetics. Still later, Blake, a genuine but undisciplined seer, attempted to recover the lost unity but lost his way in uncharted private worlds.

After him the venture fails. The best poetry became, more and more, purely lyrical and subjective. The rainbow still gleams above the waters, the magic light still glows within the heart; but, more and more, the fissure widened, polarising, however unspokenly, the *poetic* with the *actual*, poetry with life.

In this poem the fissure has been closed. Savitri (and it is no mere coincidence that the name is that of the quintessential verse of all the

Vedas as well as that of the wife of Satyavan) is neither subjective fantasy nor yet mere philosophical thought, but vision and revelation of the actual inner structure of the Cosmos and of the pilgrim of life within its sphere—Bhu, Bhuv, Swa: the Stairway of the Worlds reveals itself to our gaze—worlds of Light above, worlds of Darkness beneath—and we see also ever-circling life (“kindled in measure and quenched in measure”) ascending and descending that Stair under the calm unwinking gaze of the Cosmic Gods who shine forth now as of old. This and much more can be seen, not as some theory to be agreed or disagreed with, but as present living fact by any who can open their inner eye. For poetry—all poetry—is evocative. “Out of discussion,” says Plotinus, “we call to vision. Far above the plains of prose with their challenge to agreement or disagreement, tower the mountain peaks of poetry calling to vision. Poetry is indeed the full manifestation of the Logos, and when, as here, it is no mere iridescence dependent on some special standpoint, but the wondrous structure of the mighty Cosmos, the ‘Adorned One’, that is revealed, then in truth does it manifest in its full, its highest grandeur.

Such poetry can only be written either in the early days before the rise to power of self-conscious mind or when that particular cycle has run its course and life establishes itself once more in the unity beyond, this time with all the added range and power that has been gained during the reign of mind. It is an omen of the utmost significance and hope that in these years of darkness and despair such a poem as *Savitri* should have appeared. Let us salute the Dawn.

Sri Aurobindo

(This remarkable appreciation of Sri Aurobindo as a man and political leader was written by the great Nationalist leader and co-worker of Sri Aurobindo, Bepin Chandra Pal, in his paper 'Svaraj' which he was editing in London in 1909-1910. This was one of a series of character-sketches of the leaders of that time who were deported by the British Government and they were all extremely well-executed with a consummate depth of insight and breadth of view and in addition, a fine literary form.)

THE youngest in age among those who stand in the forefront of the Nationalist propaganda in India but in endowment, education, and character, perhaps, superior to them all—Aravinda seems distinctly marked out by Providence to play in the future of this movement a part not given to any of his colleagues and contemporaries. The other leaders of the movement have left their life behind them: Aravinda has his before him. Nationalism is their last love: it is Aravinda's first passion. They are burdened with the cares and responsibilities of large families or complex relations: Aravinda has a small family and practically no cumulative obligations. His only care is for his country—the Mother, as he always calls her. His only recognised obligations are to her. Nationalism, at the best, a concern of the intellect with some, at the lowest a political cry and aspiration with others, is with Aravinda, the supreme passion of his soul. Few, indeed, have grasped the full force and meaning of the Nationalist ideal as Aravinda has done. But even of these very few—though their vision may be clear, their action is weak. Man cannot, by a fiat of his will, at once re-create his life. Our Karma follows us with relentless insistence from day to day and from death to death. To see the vision of Truth and yet not be possessed by that supreme passion for it which burns up all other desires, and snaps asunder, like ashen bands, all other ties and obligations—this is the divine tragedy of most finer natures. They have to cry out with St. Paul at every turn of life's tortuous path, "The Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." But blessed are they for whom this tragic antithesis between the idea and the real has been cancelled; for whom to know the truth is to love it, to love the truth is to strive after it, and to strive after the truth is to attain it; in whom there is no disparity, either in time or degree, between the idea and its realisation; in whom the vision of the ideal, by its own

intrinsic strength, at once attunes every craving of the flesh, every movement of the mind, every emotion of the heart, and every impulse of the will—to itself; who have to strive for its realisation, not within, but without; who have to struggle not with their own Self but with the Not-Self; who have to fight and conquer not themselves but others, in order to establish the Kingdom of God realised by them in the relations of their own inner life, in the outer actualities and appointments of the life of their own people or of humanity at large. These are, so to say, the chosen of God. They are born leaders of men. Commissioned to serve special ends affecting the life and happiness of large masses of men, they bear a charmed life. They may be hit, but cannot be hurt. They may be struck, but are never stricken. Their towering optimism and the Grace of God turn every evil into good, every opposition into a help, every loss into a gain. By the general verdict of his countrymen, Aravinda stands today among these favoured sons of God.

Birth is not an accident. "Accident of birth" is the language of infidel empiricism. Nature has no room for accidents in her schemes. It is only man's inability to trace her secrets that has coined this word to cover his ignorance. Man's birth is no more an accident than the rise and fall of tides. There can really be no accidents in evolution, the law of natural selection has killed their chance altogether. But does the operation of natural selection start only after the birth of the organism or does it precede it? Is it only a biological, or also a psychological law? Like the problems of biology, those of psychology also are inexplicable, except on this theory. The inference is irresistible that there is such a thing as natural selection even in the psychic plane. The spirit, by the impulse of its own needs, must choose and order the conditions of its own life even as the physical organism does. This is the psychic significance of heredity. Life from this point of view is not a lottery, but a matter really of determined choice. The needs of the organism supply the organs in the lower kingdom; the desires of the heart collect and create their necessary equipment and environment for the human being. On no other hypothesis can the riddle of human life be explained more satisfactorily. It may not explain everything, but it explains many things absolutely un-understandable and inexplicable on any other hypothesis. This at least has been the Hindu view from time immemorial. A crude intuition at first, it became a settled conviction with the people subsequently, with a fundamental philosophy of causation behind it. And this theory stands curiously verified in Aravinda Ghose.

Two strong currents of thoughts, ideals, and aspirations met together and strove for supremacy in Bengal, among the generation to which Aravinda's

parents belonged. One was the current of Hindu Nationalism—of the revived life, culture and ideals of the nation that had lain dormant for centuries and had been discarded as lower and primitive by the first batch of English-educated Hindus, especially in Bengal. The other was the current of Indo-Anglicism—the onrushing life, culture and ideals of the foreign rulers of the land, which, expressing themselves through British law and administration on the one side, and the new schools and universities on the other, threatened to swamp and drown the original culture and character of the people. The two stocks from which Aravinda sprang represented these two conflicting forces in the country. His maternal grandfather, Raj Narayan Bose was one of the makers of modern Bengal. A student of David Hare, a pupil of De Rozario, an alumnus of the Hindu College, the first English college that had the support of both the Hindu community and the British rulers of the Province, Raj Narayan Bose started life as a social and religious reformer. But while he caught as fully as any one else among his contemporaries, the impulse of the new illumination, he did not lose so completely as many of them did, his hold on the fundamental spirit of the culture and civilisation of his race. He joined the Brahmo-Samaj under Maharshi Debendra Nath Tagore, but felt repelled by the denational spirit of the later developments in that movement under Keshab Chandra Sen. In fact, it is difficult to say, to which of its two leaders, Debendra Nath or Raj Narayan, the Adi or the older Brahma Samaj—as it came to be called after Keshab Chandra Sen seceded from it and established the Brahmo Samaj of India—was more indebted for its intense and conservative nationalism. But it may be safely asserted that while Debendra Nath's nationalism had a dominating theological note, Raj Narayan's had both a theological and social, as well as a political emphasis. In him, it was not merely the spirit of Hinduism that rose up in arms against the onslaught of European Christianity but, the whole spirit of Indian culture and manhood stood up to defend and assert itself against every form of undue foreign influence and alien domination. While Keshab Chandra Sen pleaded for the recognition of the truths in the Hindu scriptures side by side with those in the Bible, Raj Narayan Bose proclaimed the superiority of Hinduism to Christianity. While Keshab Chandra was seeking to reconstruct Indian, and specially Hindu social life, more or less after the British model, Raj Narayan's sturdy patriotism and national self-respect rebelled against the enormity, and came forward to establish the superiority of Hindu social economy to the Christian social institutions and ideals. He saw the onrush of European goods into Indian markets, and tried to stem the tide by quickening what we would now call the Swadeshi spirit, long before any one else had thought

of it. It was under his inspiration that a Hindu Mela, or National Exhibition, was started a full quarter of a century before the Indian National Congress thought of an Indian Industrial Exhibition. The founder of this Hindu Mela was also the first Bengalee who organised gymnasiums for the physical training of the youths of the nation. Stick and sword plays, and other ancient but decadent sports and pastimes of the people that have come into vogue recently, were originally revived at the Hindu Mela, under Raj Narayan Bose's inspiration and instruction. Raj Narayan Bose did not openly take any part in politics, but his writings and speeches did a good deal to create that spirit of self-respect and self-assertion in the educated classes that have since found such strong expression in our recent political activities.

A strong conservatism, based upon a reasoned appreciation of the lofty spirituality of the ancient culture and civilisation of the country; a sensitive patriotism, born of a healthy and dignified pride of race; and a deep piety expressing itself through all the varied practical relations of life—these were the characteristics of the life and thought of Raj Narayan Bose. He represented the high-water-mark of the composite culture of his country—Vedantic, Islamic and European. When he discoursed on Brahma-Jnana or Knowledge of God, he brought to mind the ancient Hindu Gnostics of the Upanishads. When he cited verses from the Persian poets, filling the ear with their rich cadence—with his eyes melting in love and his mobile features aglow with a supreme spiritual passion—he reminded one of the old Moslem devotees. And when he spoke on the corruptions of current religion, or the soulless selfishness of modern politics, he appeared as a nineteenth century rationalist and iconoclast of Europe. In his mind and life he was at once a Hindu Maharishi, a Moslem Sufi, and a Christian theist of the Unitarian type; and like Ram Mohan Roy, the founder of the Brahmo-Samaj, of which Raj Narayan Bose was for many years the honoured president, he also seems to have worked out a synthesis in his own spiritual life between the three dominant world-cultures that have come face to face in modern India. Like Ram Mohan, Raj Narayan also seems to have realised in himself, intellectually and spiritually, the ideal of a composite nationhood in India, which the present generation has been called upon to actualise in the social, economic, and political relations of their country. Raj Narayan Bose was also an acknowledged leader in Bengalee literature. A writer in the "Modern Review" (Calcutta) calls Raj Narayan Bose the "Grandfather of Indian Nationalism." He was Aravinda's maternal grandfather; and Aravinda owes not only his rich spiritual nature, but even his very superior literary capacity to his inherited endowments from his mother's line.

If the maternal grandfather represented the ancient spiritual forces of

his nation, Aravinda's father, Dr. Krishnadhan Ghose, represented to a very large extent the spirit of the new illumination in his country. Dr. Ghose was essentially a product of English education and European culture. A man of exceptional parts, he finished his education in England, and taking his degree in medicine, entered the medical service of the Indian Government. He was one of the most successful Civil Surgeons of his day, and, had his life been spared, he would have assuredly risen to the highest position in his service open to any native of India. Like the general body of Indian young men who came to finish their education in England in his time, Krishnadhan Ghose was steeped in the prevailing spirit of Anglicism. Like all of them, he was a thoroughly Anglicised Bengalee, in his ways of life. But unlike many of them, underneath his foreign clothing and ways, he had a genuine Hindu heart and soul. Anglicism distorts Hindu character—cripples, where it cannot kill, the inherited altruism of the man, and makes him more or less neglectful of the numerous family and social obligations under which every Hindu is born. Like the original Anglo-Saxon, his Indian imitation also lives first and foremost for himself, his wife and children; and though he may recognise the claims of his relations to his charity, he scarcely places his purse at their service as an obligation. But Krishnadhan Ghose was an exception. Though he affected the European way of living, he never neglected the social obligations of the Hindu. His purse was always open for his needy relations. The poor of the town, where he served and lived, had in him a true friend and a ready help. In fact, his regard for the poor frequently led him to sacrifice to their present needs the future prospects of his own family and children. He had his sons educated in England; and so great was his admiration for English life and English culture that he sent them out there even before they had received any schooling in their own country. But his charities made such constant and heavy inroad into his tolerably large income, that he could not always keep his own children, living in England, provided with sufficient funds for their board and schooling. Sons of comparatively rich parents, they were brought up almost in abject poverty in a friendless country where wealth counts so much, not only physically, but also intellectually and morally. Keen of intellect, tender of heart, impulsive and generous almost to recklessness, regardless of his own wants, but sensitive to the suffering of others—this was the inventory of the character of Dr. Krishnadhan Ghosh. The rich blamed him for his recklessness, the man of the world condemned him for his absolute lack of prudence, the highest virtue in his estimation. But the poor, the widow and the orphan loved him for his selfless pity, and his soulful benevolence.

When death overtook him, in the very prime of life, there was desolation in many a poor home in his district. It not only left his children in absolute poverty, but destroyed the source of ready relief to many helpless families among his relations and neighbours. His quick intellectual perceptions, his large sympathies, his selflessness, characterised by an almost absolute lack of what the man of the world, always working with an eye to the main chance, calls prudence, as a matter of personal calculation—these are Aravinda's inheritance in his father's line.

As a boy, Aravinda received his early education in a public school in England. The old headmaster of this school is reported to have said—when Aravinda's name came prominently before the British public in connection with the State trial of which he was made the principal accused, this time last year—that of all the boys who passed through his hands during the last twenty-five or thirty years, Aravinda was by far and above the most richly endowed intellectual capacity. From this school he went to Cambridge, where he distinguished himself as a student of European classics, and passed the Indian Civil Service examination with great credit. Failing, however, to stand the required test in horsemanship he was not allowed to enter the Covenanted Service of the Indian Government. But returning to India he found employment in the Native State of Baroda, where his endowments and scholarship soon attracted the notice of the authorities, leading his appointment to the post of Vice-Principal of the State College. Had Aravinda cared for earthly honours or wealth, he had a very splendid opening for both in Baroda. He was held in great respect by the Maharaja. He was loved by the educated class in the State. He was exceedingly popular with the general public. All these opened very large possibilities of preferment before him in the service of this premier Native State in India.

But there was a new awakening in the country. A new school of thought had arisen, demanding a thorough reconsideration of the old and popular political, economic, and educational ideas and ideals of the people. It abjured the old mendicant methods of prayer, protest and petition. It proclaimed a new gospel of self-help and self-reliance. It called out to the spirit of India to come to its own, to stand upon its own inner strength, and put forth its own native efforts for the realisation of its true native life. It called aloud for leaders and workers—for the poet, the prophet, the philosopher, the statesman, the organiser and man of action, to help the sacred cause. It laid on all who would accept the call of heaviest self-sacrifice yet demanded of any public man in modern India. It wanted men who could not only, as hitherto, give to their country their leisure moment

and their idle pennies, but who would consecrate all their working hours and their hard earnings to the service of the Motherland. The call went home to the heart of Aravinda. His own native Province called for him. It laid on him the vow of poverty. It offered him the yoke of the saviours of their people and the uplifters of humanity—the yoke of calumny, persecution, imprisonment and exile. Aravinda obeyed the Mother's call, accepted her stern conditions, and cheerfully took up her chastening yoke. He gave up his place in Baroda, worth £560 a year, to take up the duties of Principal in the college started at Calcutta under the new National Council of Education on a bare subsistence allowance of £10 a month.

This movement of National Education owed its origin to the latest education policy of the Indian Government, who sought to turn the institutions of public instruction in the country to distinctly political ends. The old education had given birth to wide-spread disaffection. It had called into being "the discontented B. A.'s". The new educational policy initiated by Lord Curzon was directed towards curing this evil. Its aim was to manufacture loyal citizens—men who would be eternally content to remain loyal to the autocratic government in their country, without any desire for free citizenship. The movement of National Education was the people's reply to this official policy. It took definite shape and form as a result of the persecution of the school boys by the Executive in Bengal for their participation in the new political movements in the country. But it had a more fundamental need. The officially-controlled education had been condemned by both friends and foes alike. It was shallow and rootless. It imparted the shadow, but not the substance, of modern culture to the youths of the nation. It was artificial, because foreign in both its spirit and form. It led to a fearful waste of youthful time and energy by imposing the necessity of learning a foreign language, to receive instruction through its medium in all the higher branches of study. It was controlled by an alien Bureaucracy, in the interests, mainly, of their own political position, and only secondarily in those of the real intellectual life of the pupils. It was excessively literary, and detrimental to the industrial and economic life of the country. The movement of National Education was started to counteract these evils of the officially-controlled system of public instruction. It proposed to promote—"Education, scientific, literary, and technical, on National lines, and under National control." But though owing its initiation to the threats of the Government to close the doors of the official schools and colleges and universities against those who would take any part—even to the extent of simply attending—in any political meeting or demonstration—the National Education Movement in Bengal sought

to avoid all open causes of friction with the authorities, and professed to work *independent of* but not in *opposition to* the Government. Political in its origin, it tried to avoid all conflicts with the authorities by assuming an absolutely non-political attitude.

The school of thought to which Aravinda belonged did not support this declaration of the National Council of Education, and could not appreciate this needless dread, as they thought, of offending official susceptibilities. But they had to accept the verdict of the majority. One of the most unfortunate things in modern Public life is the dependence of all large public movements on the help and support of the wealthy classes in the community. Large and organised movements in our times cannot be carried on without large and substantial financial support; and the rich are not willing, as they were in more primitive times, to lend their support to any institution without seeking to control it. This unfortunate condition lowers the intellectual and moral tone of many a public institution, which, though financed with the monies of the richer classes, would have been able, without their personal intervention or control, to keep up a very superior intellectual or moral standard. This is particularly injurious in comparatively primitive communities, where realised wealth has not yet had time to ally itself with high culture, and where, owing to the absence of a vigorous and free national life, it has but little incentive and lesser opportunities for cultivating such an alliance.

The Nationalists are a poor party in India, and the National Council of Education, though it owed its initiation to their efforts, passed, almost from the very beginning, beyond their sphere of influence, and Aravinda's position as the nominal head of the National College, practically controlled by men of different views and opinions, became almost from the very beginning more or less anomalous.

This was, from some point of view, very unfortunate. Aravinda had received the best modern education that any man of this country and generation could expect to have. He had for some years been a teacher of youth in Baroda, and had acquired a considerable practical experience in his art. He had clearly realised the spirit and actualities of the life of his nation, and knew how the most advanced principles of modern pedagogy could be successfully worked into a thoroughly national system of education in India. He went to Calcutta as an educationist. He knew that the foundations of national independence and national greatness must be laid in a strong and advanced system of national education. He had a political ideal, no doubt; but politics meant to him much more than is ordinarily understood by the term. It was not a game of expediency but a school of human character,

and, in its turn, reacting upon it, should develop and strengthen the manhood and womanhood of the nation. Education could be no more divorced from politics than it could be divorced from religion or morals. Any system of education that helps such isolation and division between the various organic relations of life, is mediaeval, and not modern. It is the education of the cloister—abstract and unreal; not the education of the modern man, eager to realise his fullest manhood in and through every relation of life. Aravinda is an apostle of modern education. Indeed his ideal of modern education is even higher than what is understood by modern education ordinarily in Europe. It is a supremely spiritual ideal. Its aim is to actualise the highest and deepest of God-consciousness of the human soul, in the outer life and appointments of human society. It was the temptation of having an open field for the realisation of this lofty educational ideal which brought Aravinda to Calcutta. Had he been given a free hand in the new National College there, that institution would have opened an altogether new chapter not only in the history of modern education in India, but perhaps in the whole world. To work the realism of the spirit of modern culture into the mould of the idealism of ancient theosophy, would not only secure for India her lost position as teacher of humanity, but would, perchance, even save modern civilisation from total collapse and destruction under the pressure of a gross and greedy industrialism.

But, unfortunately, neither individuals nor communities can easily break away from their own past. Most of the members of the new National Council of Education in Bengal were products of the old university. Some of the leading men in the new organisation had been closely associated for many years, with the actual working out of the old vicious system. Steeped in the traditions of this old education, they could hardly be expected to thoroughly enter into the spirit of modern pedagogy. They were willing to give fair room to the new principles, as an experiment, but could hardly give them their absolute and whole-hearted support, as truths. It seemed to them like jumping into the unknown. While accepting the principle of National Education as education “on national lines” and “under national control”, and, consequently, pledged not to accept any official aid, they were not free from the fear of possible official opposition, which, if once aroused, would make their work, they thought, absolutely impossible. They had a real dread of the Bureaucracy, and no strong confidence, really, in their own people. The dominating and declared ideal of the new Council, consequently, came to be not in any way, to *supplant*, but only to *supplement*, the existing Government-and-University-system of education in the country. A timid, temporising spirit, so galling to the reformer and the man with

new visions and large ideas, generally guided the work of the National Council, and it made it almost impossible for Aravinda to throw himself heart and soul into his educational work in Calcutta. His place in the National College, though he was its nominal Principal, was not really that of organiser and initiator, but simply of a teacher of language and history, even as it had been in the Maharaja's College at Baroda. He had left Baroda in the hope of finding a wider scope of beneficent and patriotic activity in the new college in Calcutta. That hope was not realised. Almost from the beginning he saw the hopelessness of the working out of a truly modern and thoroughly national system of education, through the organisation at whose service he had so enthusiastically placed himself.

But the man possessed by pure passion creates, where he cannot find them ready-made for him, his own instruments for the realisation of his supreme end in life. And wider fields of public usefulness were soon opened before Aravinda. The Nationalist School was without a daily English organ. A new paper was started. Aravinda was invited to join its staff. A joint stock company was shortly floated to run it, and Aravinda became one of the directors. This paper—"Bande Mataram"—at once secured for itself a recognised position in Indian journalism. The hand of the master was in it from the very beginning. Its bold attitude, its vigorous thinking, its clear ideas, its chaste and powerful diction, its scorching sarcasm and refined witticism were unsurpassed by any journal in the country, either Indian or Anglo-Indian. It at once raised the tone of every Bengalee paper, and compelled the admiration of even hostile Anglo-Indian editors. Morning after morning not only Calcutta, but the educated community almost in every part of the country, eagerly awaited its vigorous pronouncements on the stirring questions of the day. It even forced itself upon the notice of the callous and self-centred British press. Long extracts from it commenced to be reproduced week after week, even in the exclusive columns of the "Times" in London. It was a force in the country which none dared to ignore, however much they might fear or hate it, and Aravinda was the leading spirit, the central figure, in the new journal. The opportunities that were denied him in the National College he found in the pages of the "Bande Mataram", and from a tutor of few youths he thus became the teacher of a whole nation.

